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THE ROLE AND CHARACTER OF THE PRAETORIAN GUARD AND
THE PRAETORIAN PREFECTURE UNTIL THE
ACCESSION OF VESPASIAN

JOHN LATIMER KERR

PH.D. THESIS

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John L. Kerr
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S U M M A R Y

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the role of the Praetorian Guard in the hundred years between the battle of Actium and the accession of Vespasian. This necessitates not only a consideration of those political activities which the Praetorians undertook at the behest of their emperors but also an examination into the motivations of the guardsmen themselves. Moreover, any study of the Praetorian Guard would be less than complete without an account of the development of the Praetorian prefecture.

The historical narrative of the Julio-Claudian years reveals four areas of Praetorian prominence. The first, and most important, concerns the way in which Augustus and his successors deployed their Guard. As a military force the contribution of the Praetorians was, during this time, limited to occasional forays onto the battlefield when accompanying the emperor, such as Claudius during the invasion of Britain, or a member of the imperial family, like Germanicus when he was campaigning in Germany. Augustus, however, did not retain his Praetorian cohorts as a military elite, but rather as internal security troops to guarantee the new system of government. Their numbers were large enough - 9 cohorts of 500 men - to deter conspirators. In this preventive role they played a vital part at times of succession. Their presence at Augustus' funeral speaks as much of intimidation as of ceremonial obligation. But the Praetorians were not just a passive deterrent. They acted ruthlessly against the emperor's enemies. Within the imperial family alone we know of Praetorian involvement in the deaths of Agrippa Postumus, Nero Caesar, Drusus Caesar, Agrippina the elder, Tiberius Gemellus, Britannicus and Octavia. Praetorian detachments were responsible for the executions of, among others, Avillius Flaccus, the former prefect of Egypt, during Gaius' principate, and Rubellius Plautus who had incurred Nero's enmity. It would, however, be quite wrong to view the Praetorians as solely an oppressive force like the Gestapo or KGB. The historian's skill and the cruelty of, for example, Octavia's death too often beguile us. We should not ignore Praetorian brutality /

brutality, but such activities were but a small part of the Guard's duty. They also kept peace in Rome's turbulent theatres and were occasionally, when need dictated, sent to other towns in Italy. But, above all, we must never forget how effective they were in protecting the regime. The crushing of the conspiracies of Messalina in AD. 48 and Piso in AD. 65 should be attributed, in large measure, to the loyalty of the Praetorians.

The second area of Praetorian activity which we should note is when they intervened in the political process with a more obvious self-interest as at the assassination of Gaius in AD. 41. The prospect of a restoration of the Republic held little attraction for the Praetorian Guard. And so Claudius was found and taken to the security of the Praetorian barracks, where he promised each Praetorian the huge donative of 15,000 sesterces - a ruinous precedent. The impotent Senate huffed and puffed - and then surrendered. The manner of Claudius' accession was of immense significance. From that time Praetorian endorsement became, for a new princeps, an unavoidable constraint. In AD. 68 the Praetorians realised that, if they could make emperors, they could also unmake them. Their support for Galba at that time indicates both Nero's unpopularity and the effectiveness of Nymphidius' false promises. Again, their replacement of Galba by Otho was motivated, above all, by the old emperor's refusal to pay the donative promised in his name. In all of this we may detect a determination among the Praetorians to maintain their privileges and advantageous terms of service.

We should, however, be wary of viewing the Guard as a politically homogenous force. There were clear differences in outlook between, on the one hand, the tribunes and the centurions and, on the other, the enlisted men. Hence the participation of some Praetorian officers in the conspiracies of AD. 41 and AD. 65. Even among the guardsmen themselves we find very different social and geographical backgrounds. The political, even politicised voice with which the Praetorians spoke in AD. 69 can easily mislead us. Selfishness and the preservation of their status were the dominant factors behind Praetorian loyalty.

Some /

Some commentators have turned the focus of attention on a third, distinctly unattractive aspect of the Praetorians' conduct - their alleged indiscipline. It is clear that for much of AD. 69 the Praetorians were a law unto themselves. In March of that year Otho's guardsmen went on a drunken rampage which culminated with an invasion of the imperial palace. They also mounted surveillance on those senators whom they suspected of being Vitellian sympathizers. Their behaviour on campaign was characterized by the same chronic disorderliness. Vitellius' Praetorians, recruited in large part from the German legions, were no better. They must bear the responsibility, by their refusal to allow Vitellius to abdicate, for the death and destruction during the Flavian assault on Rome. Elsewhere, however, evidence of Praetorian indiscipline is difficult to find. We should perhaps regard such aberrant conduct as the inevitable concomitant of their occasional interventions in the political process. This is not to excuse anarchy, but a hundred years of fidelity to a succession of emperors should not be defamed because of a few isolated incidents.

Finally let us consider the Praetorian prefecture established, perhaps reluctantly, by Augustus in 2BC. Too often the developing importance of the post is ignored as we are mesmerized by the accomplishments of prefects like Seianus and Burrus. It is undoubtedly true that such men enhanced the status of the prefecture by their tenure, but the office was, from the beginning, a post of great potentiality. It appears to have had, unlike the other prefectures, an open-ended remit encompassing the whole area of imperial security rather than just command of the Praetorian cohorts, important as that was. Hence we find the prefect involved in the juridical process and serving on the emperor's consilium. The nature of the office necessitated regular, perhaps even daily contact between emperor and prefect. This in turn led to familiarity and sometimes friendship. But there were dangers too. Imperial suspicion, the harbinger of ruin, was all too easily aroused. Seianus' fall in AD. 31, for example, certainly underlines the limitations of the prefecture and the dependence of holders of that post on the emperor's continuing favour, but it should not blind us to its growing prestige and expanding role.

CHAPTER 1

THE AUGUSTAN GUARD AND ITS PREDECESSORS

The Praetorian Guard of Augustus had its immediate origins in the Praetorian cohorts of the civil war period, although its antecedents stretched, as we shall see, considerably further back than that.

Augustus, no more revolutionary in this regard than in any other of his undertakings,¹ was, as Durry has pointed out, 'héritier d'une longue tradition'.² But here, as in so much else, his genius lay in the skill with which he adapted an institution of the Republican period to suit his own needs.

It had been an established practice, long before the civil wars, for Roman generals, while on active service, to surround themselves with elite bands which could serve either as a bodyguard³ or as a tactical reserve capable of being deployed in battle whenever and wherever necessary. Livy tells us that the dictator Postumius at the battle of Lake Regillus, in 496 BC. surrounded himself with picked troops 'praesidii causa'.⁴ We also know from Livy that Scipio Africanus, when in Sicily in 205 BC., had a personal guard of three hundred sturdy young men who were awarded horses and weapons.⁵ Festus, the 2nd century epitomizer of Verrius Flaccus, specifically uses the term 'praetoria cohors' to describe Africanus' bodyguard which he alleges was chosen from the bravest men in the army who were then relieved of all other duties and had their pay increased by 50%.⁶ It seems more likely, however, that the cavalry escorts of nobles like Africanus, and later Scipio Aemilianus,⁷ were formed mainly from their own clients and friends. It was Marius, an innovator in this as in so many other aspects /

aspects of army organisation, who regularised the trend among Roman commanders towards the use of bodyguards by creating for himself a cavalry escort, membership of which was determined by military competence rather than by social caste.⁸

It is quite clear, however, that during the earlier decades of the 1st century BC. the term Praetorian cohort was not used in an exclusively military context.⁹ It was commonly used to describe the staff which a provincial governor was allowed to recruit to accompany him during his tour of duty. So Cicero writes of the Praetorian cohorts of Verres in Sicily¹⁰ and of his brother Quintus in Greece,¹¹ and derides 'Catiline's Praetorian guard of pansies'.¹² We find a similar use of the term by the poet Catullus who spent an unprofitable and unpleasant year in the Praetorian cohort of Gaius Memmius in Bithynia.¹³

Cicero applies the same term to military units, writing of his own Praetorian cohort which fought against Parthian and Arabian horsemen in Cilicia¹⁴ and of that of Carbo who in 82 BC. commanded the Marian forces in Cisalpine Gaul.¹⁵ The term is also used with a similar, though more obvious, military implication by Sallust who tells us that Marcus Petreius commanded the Praetorian cohort of Gaius Antonius against Catiline's forces at the battle of Pistoria,¹⁶ and by Caesar who encouraged his frightened troops during the campaign against Ariovistus by threatening to leave with only his 10th legion which would serve him as a Praetorian cohort.¹⁷ Such a development is, of course, only natural given the increasing militarisation during the last 30 years of the Republican era.

But /

But it was more especially in the wars following Caesar's assassination that the use of Praetorian cohorts became widespread and the number of such units greatly increased. There were obvious tactical advantages for a commander in having readily available an elite force of this kind. Nor should we ignore the need for personal protection felt by men for whom it would have been unrealistic not to take precautions against possible assassination at the hands of a rival's agents.¹⁸ Both Antony and Octavian felt compelled to obtain large bodyguards during this period¹⁹ and there are numerous mentions, by Appian especially, of the Praetorian cohorts of both.²⁰ Indeed, at Mutina these cohorts actually fought against each other.²¹ In the following year on the very day of the battle of Philippi a convoy under the command of Domitius Calvinus which was bringing Praetorian cohorts to Octavian was destroyed in the Adriatic by Murcus and Ahenobarbus.²² Despite the absence of these forces from the battlefield Antony and Octavian were victorious and after the battle organised 8,000 veterans who wished to remain soldiers into Praetorian cohorts, then divided these troops equally between them.²³ Octavian's cohorts took part in the campaign against Lucius Antonius in Perusia.²⁴ After Antony landed at Brundisium in 40 BC., the Praetorian cohorts on both sides urged their commanders to resolve their differences without fighting.²⁵ Their petitions were successful and as a result of the agreement made at this time Antony married Octavia who in 37 BC. brought him from her brother 2000 soldiers selected for service in Praetorian cohorts.²⁶ Antony advertised the loyalty of his Praetorian cohorts, three of whom were involved in his Parthian expedition,²⁷ through an issue of coins.²⁸ He similarly honoured a special duties cohort of speculatores²⁹ who provided /

provided an inner bodyguard and acted as scouts and perhaps also as executioners and assassins.³⁰ We have no firm evidence as to the number of cohorts Octavian maintained during this period, although, according to Orosius,³¹ he put five on board ships for the battle of Actium.

The origins of the Praetorian cohorts which fought at Actium are reasonably clear. It is much more difficult, however, to trace the manner in which those cohorts changed from the warbands of a military baron into an internal security force whose principal purpose was to guarantee the security of the new regime. Dio Cassius provides us with a certain amount of information (which we should regard warily) on the organisation of the Praetorians at this time. From our other sources we have only snippets. There is scant literary evidence of the Praetorians' developing political role during the Augustan period. We may surmise, for example, that the Praetorians were involved in the suppression of the major conspiracies against Augustus - those of Varro Murena and Fannius Caepio in 21 BC. and of Iullus Antonius in 2 BC. - but we cannot cite any sources to support such suppositions. For this Tacitus must be blamed. His determination to portray Tiberius as responsible for the descent of the principate into tyranny not only deprives us of a detailed account of the Augustan principate but also fundamentally misleads us as to its nature by refusing to acknowledge the developing autocracy under Augustus. But such an admission is vital if we are to understand the relationship between the Praetorian Guard and the emperor. We know that the Praetorian cohorts of AD. 14 were a very different force from their predecessors of 31 BC. as /

as regards both their role and their character. These changes did not happen in a political vacuum. The way in which the Praetorian cohorts were used was the epitome of the developing principate.

Augustus felt that he needed to keep his Praetorian cohorts after the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra. His decision to retain and develop this force was perhaps a less conscious one than Dio Cassius implies.³² It would, in fact, have been more surprising had he disbanded these cohorts especially given the difficult political and economic situation in Italy caused, in the aftermath of Actium, by the large-scale demobilisation³³ and confiscations of land which led to a high level of banditry.³⁴ Besides, although no single rival remained to challenge his authority,³⁵ there were still considerable dangers and serious problems to be overcome, for political normality was not the necessary concomitant of military victory and, in any case, the disruptive effects of the civil wars had led to a situation where each man's concept of such normality was likely to be highly subjective. Moreover, some degree of senatorial opposition to the notion of the principate could be taken for granted.³⁶ The considerable number of executions and proscriptions for which the new ruler could be held responsible was not likely to be forgotten or forgiven.³⁷ To counter such threats Augustus clearly needed an internal security force. But he had the perspicacity to realise that such a unit, while able to deter any disaffected senators considering conspiracy, was by itself unlikely to help, and indeed would probably obstruct, the national reconciliation which he sought to encourage. Such was the dilemma of the victor of Actium. He had no wish to hide behind the swords of his bodyguard like some /

some Greek tyrant³⁸ or to divide the nation further by organising his support on partisan or class lines like Manlius,³⁹ Sulpicius⁴⁰ or Sulla.⁴¹ He saw quite clearly that the only system of government likely to ensure lasting peace was one based on the support of all sections of society.⁴² Furthermore senatorial support was not a luxury which Augustus might cultivate or spurn as it suited him for, in truth, he could not rule without the help of an oligarchy.⁴³

And so, although Augustus retained his Praetorians to guarantee his own security and that of the new system of government, they were merely one component in the larger structure of state which he was attempting to create. He could not allow them to become an overtly intimidatory force⁴⁴ and thereby alienate senatorial support. It was, as Syme rightly notes, 'inexpedient for Augustus to suppress any activity that could do him no harm'.⁴⁵ To this end he chose to endure the catcalls of the arrogant when he spoke in the Senate⁴⁶ and to release the foolish Gnaeus Cornelius, Pompey's grandson, who had become involved in a plot against him.⁴⁷ Moreover, if the sight of soldiers on the streets of the capital was anathema to some die-hards, then Augustus was willing to indulge their sensitivities to the extent of instructing his Praetorians to wear civilian dress while guarding his palace. His indulgence, however, was not limitless. Beneath their togas they still carried swords.⁴⁸ And if there were some who mistook this realism for weakness, the fate of Varro Murena and Fannius Caepio was a salutary reminder of the Praetorian iron fist that lay beneath the velvet glove of Augustus' toleration.⁴⁹

It is often assumed on the evidence of Tacitus that Augustus organised his Praetorians in 9 cohorts.⁵⁰ Since the normal complement of a legion was 10 cohorts, this choice may have reflected a desire on his part to avoid giving the impression that he was setting up an 'imperial' legion based in or near Rome.⁵¹ On the other hand it may merely be a reflection of the number of Praetorian cohorts, both Antony's and his own, which took part in the fighting at Actium.⁵² It is possible, however, that there were more than 9 cohorts during Augustus' principate. Tacitus' figure of 9 cohorts indicates the situation under Tiberius in AD. 23. Epigraphic evidence shows 12 cohorts by the reign of Nero - an increase perhaps initiated by Gaius.⁵³ A more recent discovery, however, suggests that there may have been an 11th cohort under Augustus or Tiberius.⁵⁴ If this change was made by Tiberius after AD. 23 then we are right to assume that there were 9 cohorts under Augustus. However, the more natural interpretation of the order of posts on the inscription is that the increase was made by Augustus and that Tiberius effected a reduction some time before AD. 23.⁵⁵

There has been much debate over the exact size of these cohorts. Dio Cassius writes of cohorts of 1000 men in the time of Augustus.⁵⁶ It seems probable, however, that these numbers reflect the situation during his own early life under the Antonine emperors. From Tacitus we know that Vitellius, after the death of Otho, formed a new Guard of 16 cohorts, each 1000 strong.⁵⁷ Durry believes that the Praetorian cohorts were quingenary in the Julio-Claudian period and re-emphasises Tacitus' statement so that it has the sense *non seulement on enrolait seize /*

seize cohortes pr toriennes et quatre urbaines, mais encore chacune devait avoir 1000 hommes.⁵⁸ This thesis failed, however, to convince Passerini, although his own arguments for milliary cohorts are not compelling.⁵⁹ There was also a small cavalry detachment used perhaps, at this stage, mainly to carry messages.⁶⁰

Augustus' original Guard consisted of veterans of the civil wars but as these men reached the end of their service and were settled in colonies,⁶¹ further recruitment became necessary. This took place almost entirely in Italy,⁶² reflecting both the emphasis found in contemporary literature of the Augustan principate as an Italian triumph⁶³ and Augustus' own determination to maintain a martial spirit among the people of Italy.⁶⁴ Some of those who joined the Praetorians, and not just at officer level,⁶⁵ may have originally served in the urban cohorts which Durry suggests were a cadet force for the Praetorians, though it would be unwise, given the limited epigraphic evidence, to suggest that service in the urban cohorts was necessary or compulsory for a soldier hoping to enter the Guard.⁶⁶

There were advantages and privileges, both immediate and long-term, for those Italians who served in the Praetorian Guard. According to Dio Cassius, Augustus in 13 BC. enacted that the Praetorians should be discharged after 12 years and ordinary legionaries after 16.⁶⁷ In AD. 5 these lengths of service were extended to 16 years for Praetorians and 20 years for those in the legions, who were also expected to spend another 5 years in the reserve.⁶⁸ This provided opportunities for Praetorian evocati to gain promotion, especially into the senior legionary /

legionary centurionate.⁶⁹ Dio also alleges that Augustus' first act after being voted extraordinary powers by the Senate in 27 BC. was to pay his Praetorians double what the legionaries received 'so that he might be strictly guarded'.⁷⁰ However, since the scale of gratuities given by Augustus in AD. 5 was in a ratio of 5 to 3,⁷¹ we would probably be correct in assuming that this was the figure initially as well. We should also note that in the will of Augustus this ratio was doubled, for the Praetorians received 250 denarii each and the legionaries only 75.⁷² These were not the only benefits available to the Praetorians. Soon there developed that pernicious and ruinous practice whereby each new emperor secured their loyalty with a very handsome donative which could be equivalent to five years' pay.⁷³

The Praetorians were not, at this stage, allocated permanent barracks and, indeed, Augustus kept only 3 cohorts in Rome itself, while the rest were dispersed in towns near the city.⁷⁴ One of the reasons for this might have been that there were no barracks readily available in Rome and the notoriously parsimonious Augustus was unwilling to spend money constructing such a facility. However it is also clear that Augustus was determined to avoid offending the Senate which he would have done had he allowed too many soldiers, whose primary loyalty was to him personally, to be stationed in Rome.⁷⁵ His disposition of the cohorts may also have been motivated by a desire to ensure that they were, as far as possible, kept separate from one another and possibly, by rotation, from any permanent base so that, if the loyalty of any particular cohort was compromised, then the sedition was unlikely to spread to other cohorts.

The existence of Augustus' German bodyguard may also be regarded as a precaution against the possibility of Praetorian sedition.⁷⁶ Since they were recruited, unlike the Praetorians, from the furthest territories of the empire, they had no political or personal ties with anyone in Rome. The possession of two guard units, performing possibly similar functions, may appear to have been an unnecessary duplication by Augustus.⁷⁷ But tyrannies, even benevolent ones, are rarely monolithic. It was, and indeed still is, common practice among authoritarian rulers to promote, as much from instinct as the result of any deliberate policy, a rivalry between different groups devoted to the same purpose. This system of multiplicity should not be regarded indicative of any doubt on Augustus' part as to the loyalty of his Praetorians, or indeed the Germans.⁷⁸ It was prudent foresight, nothing more.

Augustus did not, at first, appoint an overall commander for his Praetorian cohorts, preferring to leave each cohort under the control of its own tribune.⁷⁹ He may have wished to keep himself as the sole focus of Praetorian loyalty and, indeed, to continue a system which had apparently worked well enough in the years before Actium. More probably, however, we should link Augustus' failure to appoint a prefect with the Praetorians' civilian dress and lack of a central barracks and conclude that he did not want his Praetorians to be thought of as a single unit under one commander to avoid offending senatorial sensitivities.⁸⁰ It was not until 2 BC. that Augustus relinquished his direct control over the Praetorians.⁸¹ Syme may well be correct in seeing a link between this development and the dangerous crisis /

crisis which occurred in the autumn of that year involving Augustus' daughter, Julia, and, among others, Iullus Antonius, consul in 10 BC. and former proconsul of Asia.⁸² Although Julia's life-style and the artistic pretensions of the arrogant men who courted her favour⁸³ made it relatively easy for the authorities to portray their offences as sexual decadence,⁸⁴ a more proper assessment would nevertheless suggest that 'adultery was only a pretext or an aggravation'.⁸⁵ It is possible, of course, that the investigation of a sexual scandal unearthed more serious offences of a political nature. But, in truth, the rank of those involved and their previous involvement in political activities touching even Augustus' own arrangements for the succession⁸⁶ meant that any offence on their part had political implications. We need not go further than this, despite Pliny's claims of a plot to murder Augustus.⁸⁷ The whole episode, which culminated in the exile of his only daughter, traumatised the ageing princeps. It is arguable that it was an awareness of the limitations of his own powers which led him to see the need for a new level of authority within the Praetorian corps. His anxiety over the succession and his desire to protect his grandsons may have caused him to appreciate the dangers of leaving a void in the command structure of such an important military force. And so it is possible to regard the appointment of prefects as an implicit recognition of the vital role which the Praetorians were expected to play in ensuring the peaceful transfer of power on Augustus' death.

Augustus entrusted the command of his Praetorians to two prefects, Quintus Ostorius Scapula and Publius Salvius Aper, wary perhaps of placing /

placing so much power in the hands of one man.⁸⁸ Durry, following Mommsen, writes of the 'ancient republican principle' of 'collegialité',⁸⁹ but there is little evidence in this case to justify such an assertion.⁹⁰ Egypt, even after the treason of Gallus, continued to be governed by a single prefect and, even although disloyalty by a Praetorian prefect would have presented Augustus with a more immediate and greater threat, it is difficult to accept that he was unable to find one man of whose loyalty he was certain. Besides, this whole argument that Augustus appointed two prefects as a safeguard in case of the disloyalty of one of them is, to some extent, invalidated by the fact that at the time of his death in AD. 14 there was a single prefect, Lucius Seius Strabo.⁹¹ Dessau puts forward another explanation as to why there were originally two prefects, suggesting that one was in charge of the cohorts in Rome, while the other supervised those outside.⁹² We could perhaps develop this point and argue that one prefect served on the emperor's staff as a liaison officer, while the other had operational command of the cohorts. But this argument too is confuted by the existence of a single prefect later in Augustus' principate. It may be more profitable to look at the situation which existed in 2 BC. and to assume that Augustus, in appointing two prefects, was acting to resolve an immediate problem rather than in anticipation of possible treachery in the future. We have already seen the links between the creation of the prefecture and the threat posed by Iullus Antonius whose aims may have included marriage to Julia and guardianship over Augustus' grandsons. The discovery and suppression of this venture did not encourage Augustus to recall Tiberius, but it perhaps made him aware /

aware of the need to take active measures to protect the interests of each of his grandsons whom he may have intended to be joint rulers on his death.⁹³ Should we not then link the double prefecture to this co-regency?

Both prefects were members of the equestrian order. Durry suggests that the achievements of Maecenas so impressed Augustus that he was moved to appoint other members of this order to important state positions.⁹⁴ It is, however, quite clear that Augustus, although he employed a number of equites in higher military posts of his own creation, did not establish any regular pattern of promotion. This is not to argue that the equestrian connection is irrelevant in this matter. Augustus felt able to tolerate the immense power of the Praetorian prefects largely because, as equites, their origins excluded them from being rivals for the throne. Over 200 years were to pass until a Praetorian prefect, Macrinus, became emperor and, even then, many senators were offended by his elevation.⁹⁵ Besides, to have entrusted control of a unit as large as the Praetorian Guard to a senator for any considerable length of time would possibly have been politically dangerous, especially given the highly combustible mixture of lingering nostalgia for the Republic and personal ambition which lurked in many a senator's heart.⁹⁶ In rejecting the concept of a senatorial prefect, Augustus was, perhaps unconsciously, attempting to separate, in Italy at least, the administration of political power from that of military power.⁹⁷

It was logical for Augustus to use such a readily available unit as the Praetorians /

Praetorians for those new tasks which became necessary as political circumstances changed during the course of his principate. By the time of Augustus' death they were undertaking a wide range of duties. They were not only acting as a bodyguard unit for the emperor but had become heavily involved in internal security, including escorting and watching over important imperial prisoners, such as Julia, Augustus' daughter, Julia the Younger and Agrippa Postumus, who had fallen from favour and could not, in the interests both of dignity and of security, be left unguarded.⁹⁸ The Praetorians combined their traditional ceremonial duties with their internal security role by their escort of Augustus' body back to Rome from Nola in AD. 14 and by their presence at his funeral. These were clearly marks of respect to an honoured leader, but they can also be regarded as attempts to intimidate those who did not support the principle of the principate or Augustus' choice of successor and to make them aware of the strength which would confront them if they indulged in conspiracy.⁹⁹

Augustus went to considerable lengths to minimise the impact of the Praetorians on the streets of Rome. He was genuinely eager to avoid the impression that his new system of government was a military tyranny.¹⁰⁰ But the essentially repressive nature of the principate ensured that the policing element of the Praetorians' duties was likely to increase. By AD. 14 they were essentially an internal security force. And, as Augustus' successors grew more absolutist and became less tolerant of dissent, to whom was it more natural for them to turn for support and help in stifling freedom than to their Praetorians?

CHAPTER II

THE PRAETORIAN GUARD OF TIBERIUS - AD. 14 TO AD. 31

Tiberius' principate is notable for the manner in which the role of the Praetorians developed, under Seianus' direction, from a largely reactive posture, protecting the emperor from attack, to a much more aggressive stance, taking pre-emptive action against those judged to be the emperor's enemies before any direct threat to the emperor actually manifested itself. We saw the beginnings of this development during Augustus' principate, but it was only after AD. 14 that this new role became more clearly defined. The impulse for such a change can be found, in part, in the nature of the principate itself. The fiction, for example, that the Praetorian cohorts owed their allegiance to the state rather than to the emperor personally deceived no-one.¹ That the principate was, in essence, a tyranny was obvious to all. In the face of the reality of the Praetorians' military strength, Tiberius' professions of his wish to involve the Senate more in the process of government seemed of little worth. Another factor too merits our attention. Part of the explanation for the changed role of the Praetorians can be attributed to the temperament of Tiberius himself. In his characterisation of that emperor Tacitus gives us a vicious, hypocritical tyrant.² But behind the outwardly aloof and suspicious nature one may detect a credulous gullibility - for a manipulative prefect an exploitable weakness. We may also sense in Tiberius a profound and complex insecurity. That awareness of the personal risks of his position, which was destined to become a constricting obsession, can be discovered even at the beginning of his principate in the prominent /

prominent escorts which accompanied his trips to the forum and to the Senate.³

The transference of power was, in Rome at least, smooth. The loyalty of the Praetorians to the principate was rewarded and confirmed by the generous donative of 1000 sesterces per man which Augustus had provided in his will.⁴ Even before the reading of the will in the Senate, Tiberius had conspicuously accepted the oath of loyalty from Seius Strabo, the senior Praetorian prefect, directly after the oaths of the consuls.⁵ He had also given the watchword to the tribune in charge of the Praetorian cohort on duty at the palace.⁶ The symbolic nature of such actions should not lead us to underestimate their importance. They were much more than ritual gestures. Praetorian fidelity guaranteed the immediate security of the regime. It was, in the final analysis, the javelins of the Praetorian cohorts which ensured that dissent did not rise above the level of private diatribes at the dinner parties of those nobles nostalgic for lost privileges. Hence the very public profile of the Guard at the funeral of Augustus – professedly a display of respect for a distinguished ruler, but judged offensive by a senatorial historian who saw it as a calculated act of intimidation.⁷

It would, however, be wrong to overstate the importance of the Praetorians at this time. It is noteworthy that at the same time as Tiberius was ensuring the loyalty of the Guard, he was also sending Praetorian speculatores to the legions 'tamquam adepto principatu'.⁸

Tiberius did not owe gratitude to any particular faction with regard to the succession. The material interests of all classes, the bounties /

bounties of internal security and external strength and the intricate system of relationships and marriage built up by Augustus combined to ensure the continuance of the principate. Although Tiberius was, like Augustus before him, quick to acknowledge the value of the Praetorian cohorts, he owed them no special debt of gratitude for his succession. The Guard's support was only one of many pillars on which Tiberius' principate was based.

Tiberius' accession was not, however, universally acclaimed. The legions of lower Germany were restless. An alternative candidate was ready to hand - Germanicus, son of Drusus and, on his mother's side, grandson of Marcus Antonius.⁹ There were reasons to hope that he might be willing to lead a rebellion. Of these the most cogent was the presence with him in Germany of his wife Agrippina, Augustus' granddaughter and no friend of Tiberius. But Germanicus, a tragic hero to Tacitus but, in truth, a man of straw, irresolute and insensitive, vacillated claiming loyalty to his adoptive father.¹⁰ The moment was lost. How the Praetorians would have reacted had Germanicus declared an interest in obtaining the principate must remain a matter of speculation. It is, however, worth noting the ecstatic reception he received on his return from Germany when all the Praetorian cohorts, in blatant contravention of their orders, went out from Rome to meet him.¹¹

A more positive picture of the Praetorians' loyalty to their emperor is provided by their conduct during the mutiny of the legions in Pannonia in AD. 14. It may well be that Velleius Paterculus exaggerates the danger /

danger of this disorder to heighten the prestige of Tiberius for his resolution of the problem,¹² but Tacitus' account of the incident suggests that its potential seriousness should not be underestimated.¹³ To ensure the effective suppression of the mutiny, which probably had its origins in the discontent felt by the large number of conscripts enrolled in the army during the uprisings in Pannonia in and after AD. 6, Tiberius felt it necessary to despatch to Pannonia, under the command of his son Drusus, two reinforced Praetorian cohorts, the Guard's small cavalry detachment and a picked detachment, probably the cavalry, of the German Guard.¹⁴ The choice of these troops may, in the short term at least, have exacerbated the problem, since Tacitus specifically mentions the resentment of the legionaries towards the Praetorians and the envy which they felt for the higher pay and shorter, more comfortable conditions of service enjoyed by the Guard.¹⁵ We know, at any rate, that after Drusus' initial attempt to win over the mutineers failed, there was open antagonism between the two groups.¹⁶ A change of tactics was required. Drusus mixed conciliation, allowing a deputation to carry their grievances to Tiberius in Rome,¹⁷ with ruthlessness. Vibulenus and Percennius, the most articulate of the mutineers, were executed inside Drusus' tent.¹⁸ Luck too favoured the emperor's son. An eclipse of the moon and the onset of bad weather combined to ensure the collapse of the mutineers' spirit.¹⁹ The other ringleaders were slaughtered by Praetorian pickets as they tried to escape from the camp.²⁰ The killing of Roman citizens should not distract us. What impresses is the willingness of, at most, 1500 Praetorians to challenge successfully a mutiny by a force over ten times as strong. It is, indeed, possible to argue that the fidelity of the Praetorians /

Praetorians at this time was largely responsible for preventing the development of the sort of chaos which was to follow the suicide of Nero fifty years later.

Foreign ventures, however, were not, despite these incidents and the involvement of two cohorts with Germanicus on the Weser in AD. 16,²¹ a common experience for the Praetorians. The maintenance of public security in Rome could only be guaranteed by the presence of a strong internal security force. The theatre mobs - the breeding ground for many a rabble-rouser²² - were especially disruptive.²³ Their hooliganism, with its politically dangerous undertones, was an affront and challenge to orderly government. Tiberius had never, as a soldier, shrunk from the harshest measures to maintain discipline.²⁴ Civil disobedience demanded similar sanctions. Responsibility for the policing of the theatres and suppressing the riots was given to the Praetorian cohorts. Although the operation was successful - the leaders of the various factions were expelled from the city - it was not without cost to the Guard. A centurion and several other soldiers lost their lives, while a tribune was wounded.²⁵ Such policing duties were not confined to Rome as Suetonius' description of the crushing of a riot by the Praetorians at Pollentia shows.²⁶

Other duties were of a more sinister nature. The elimination of those judged dangerous to the emperor's interests is a notable feature of Tiberius' principate. Augustus had not hesitated to act ruthlessly against his political enemies when he felt it necessary. Iullus Antonius' fate shows us that much. But he also knew the value of clemency. /

clemency. It is difficult, on the other hand, to imagine Tiberius displaying the sort of compassion which his predecessor showed to Gnaeus Cornelius.²⁷ Vindictiveness is the hallmark of the reign and of an emperor increasingly willing to use the Praetorians to imprison and torture, intimidate and murder those who threatened the security of his regime. Rank was no guarantee of immunity. Indeed it was the prominence of his victims which provoked Tiberius' suspicions. And almost inevitably the agents of his persecution were the Praetorians.

It was certainly a Praetorian centurion who, at the beginning of the reign, executed the allegedly depraved and unstable Agrippa Postumus on the island of Planasia, to where he had been exiled in AD. 7.²⁸ That an order to kill Postumus was sent to the tribune in charge is not disputed - Praetorian officers did not execute princes of the imperial family without proper authority - but the source of that order is less clear.²⁹ Tiberius, on being informed of the youth's death by his executioner, denied any involvement in the framing of the order and expressed outrage. Genuine or feigned? Tacitus is predictably reluctant to absolve Tiberius, but his account of Sallustius Crispus' reaction to the prospect of an investigation into the matter by the Senate implicitly suggests that Tiberius may have been innocent.³⁰ The significance of this episode, however, lies for us not in the reaction of Tiberius, nor even in the death of Postumus, but in the insight which it permits us into the relationship between the imperial court and the Praetorian Guard. If Tiberius did not authorise Postumus' execution, if Seianus had no part in the affair - and we may be sure that Tacitus would have recorded the smallest hint of suspicion /

suspicion against the prefect - then we may reasonably conclude that the Praetorian Guard was not a monolithic organisation and that it mirrored, especially in its upper reaches, the machiavellian politics of the imperial court.

The prince's murder was an ominous prelude of what was to follow. In the same year Sempronius Gracchus was put to death. One of Julia's lovers and allegedly author of a letter sent to Augustus under Julia's name which listed Tiberius' faults, he had been exiled to a small island off the coast of North Africa. Tacitus discounts a rumour that the executioners were sent by Lucius Asprenas, the proconsul of Africa, and implies that they were Praetorians from Rome.³¹

Two years later the Praetorians were instrumental in bringing about the suicide of Marcus Scribonius Libo Drusus - an event, according to Tacitus, of prime significance in the development of the Tiberian terror.³² This foolish young man had become hopelessly involved in magic, astrology and eastern mysticism.³³ Tiberius, however, suspected that these were a cover for more dangerous intentions.³⁴ A senatorial investigation began. When Libo, by now a shambling wreck, returned home during an adjournment, he found his house surrounded by Praetorian guardsmen. This proved the final straw for the distraught nobleman and, in a panic, he took his own life.³⁵ Garzetti sees the young man as 'a victim of the Senate's search for opportunities to display its zeal, not of an arbitrary action on the part of the princeps'.³⁶ But such an interpretation fails to address the question of why the Praetorians were sent to Libo's house. Perhaps Tiberius regarded Libo as /

as a threat to security? But that is scarcely the Libo of Tacitus. Arrest would seem premature since the trial was not over. Intimidation is highly probable. I suggest that Tiberius sent a detachment of Praetorians with orders to let themselves be seen and heard as much as possible with the specific objective of forcing an obviously broken man to suicide. The Praetorians' hands were bloody, and were to be bloodier still before the reign ended.

The same year perhaps saw a Praetorian undercover operation, master-minded by the regime's Walsingham, Sallustius Crispus, to arrest Clemens, the former slave of Agrippa Postumus.³⁷ Because he was roughly the same age as his master and of similar appearance, Clemens, operating from a base in Gaul, was able to pass himself off as Agrippa and attracted considerable support.³⁸ Although the threat posed by Clemens can be judged retrospectively to have been slight, it was certainly viewed more seriously at the time. Our sources agree that Clemens was kidnapped by agents who pretended to support him, then taken to Tiberius' palace where he was tortured and put to death.³⁹ If his kidnappers were Praetorians, we have the first, though by no means the last, example of members of the Praetorian cohorts acting as agents provocateurs.⁴⁰

A Praetorian escort, although ostensibly a mark of honour, frequently had a more sinister purpose. When Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso left the Senate, knowing that, whatever the truth about the death of Germanicus, he could not escape the charge of re-entering his province without permission, he was accompanied by a Praetorian officer - vario rumore custos salutis an mortis exactor sequeretur.⁴¹ Piso's suicide can

leave us in no doubt as to the officer's purpose.⁴²

The principal victims of such utilization of the Praetorians were undoubtedly Agrippina and her sons. The reasons are manifest. We have already noted the adulation which Germanicus received from the Praetorian cohorts on his return from Germany. Death did not diminish his popularity. The return of his ashes to Rome in AD. 20 produced a shock wave of emotion and grief among the people and widespread sympathy for Agrippina.⁴³ Tiberius had not failed to anticipate this. The two cohorts of the Guard sent to Brundisium to accompany Germanicus' ashes to Rome were also able to ensure that Agrippina's rash tongue was not allowed to inflame the considerable number of friends and adherents who had gone south from Rome to pay their respects to her.⁴⁴ Yet Tiberius was uneasy. He recognised and feared Agrippina's ambitions and manipulative skills and was determined that she should not be allowed to attract that devotion which the Praetorians had accorded to her husband.⁴⁵

Hence a two-fold strategy - firstly to ensure that the Praetorians were not seduced to the cause of Agrippina, then to deploy those same Praetorians as part of a broader campaign aimed at eliminating her political power-base. Tiberius' decision to allow Seianus to concentrate the Praetorian cohorts perhaps reflects his anxiety over the extent of support for Agrippina within the Guard.⁴⁶ Dissent could less easily be concealed in the new barracks on the Viminal hill than in the dispersed billets where the Praetorians had previously lived.⁴⁷ Centurions and tribunes suspected of disaffection were gradually replaced /

replaced by men personally vetted by Seianus.⁴⁸ With the loyalty of the Praetorians assured, Tiberius was able to move to the offensive. The senators were invited to a demonstration of the Praetorians' parade-ground skills. The purpose of the exercise was not, of course, to solicit the senators' admiration for the Guard's expertise in drill, but rather to intimidate them and remind them of the real source of power in Rome.⁴⁹ It was undoubtedly effective. As Agrippina's support disintegrated under this and other pressures, more direct action was taken against her and her sons, Nero Caesar and Drusus Caesar.⁵⁰ Praetorians followed them everywhere and took care not to be inconspicuous in their surveillance.⁵¹ Tiberius intended that Germanicus' widow and sons should recognise whose net was closing round them and in that recognition to feel terror.

If, however, such tactics were intended to provoke Agrippina into some desperate response, they were manifestly unsuccessful. There was no flight to the German legions, despite the best efforts of Seianus' agents.⁵² Tiberius tired of the game, and Livia's death removed whatever protection she could provide for Agrippina.⁵³ Dissimulation was laid aside, revealing more nakedly the hatred of the emperor for his step-daughter. A letter denouncing Agrippina and Nero was sent from Capreae. The Senate initially hesitated but, after a second letter, was forced, chastened, to act. Agrippina and Nero were condemned and arrested.⁵⁴ A Praetorian escort moved the prisoners from their place of confinement in Rome to the islands of Pandateria and Pontia in closed litters with their wrists and ankles fettered and even prevented anyone from stopping to watch the litters passing.⁵⁵

After the humiliation came the torment. Tiberius was unforgiving in his hatred and the agents of his viciousness were the Praetorians, several of whom undertook, without apparent qualms, the step from jailer to torturer and executioner. A Praetorian centurion, acting on Tiberius' orders, beat Agrippina so severely that she lost an eye. It was probably Praetorians too who tried unsuccessfully to force-feed her after she started to refuse food.⁵⁶ Fate was hardly kinder to her eldest son. He committed suicide after a Praetorian executioner showed him the noose with which he was to be hanged and the hooks for dragging his body to Rome.⁵⁷ Drusus Caesar too was to die horribly. In AD. 30 he was persuaded to leave the relative safety of Capreae and come to Rome.⁵⁸ There he was imprisoned in a cellar in the palace and brutally tortured by Attius, a Praetorian centurion. He died in particularly gruesome circumstances in AD. 33.⁵⁹

It would, however, be misleading to assume, despite such horrors and cruelties, that a reign of terror existed during these years. Tacitus, of course, is eager to imply that the climate of fear was pervasive and widespread. Such a scenario concurs nicely with his characterisation of both Tiberius and Seianus.⁶⁰ But a less biased appraisal suggests the emperor's victims were largely confined to the highest class of Roman society and were, moreover, relatively few in number. The domination of Seianus, if we may rightly use such a term, was no golden age, but neither was it the despotic tyranny which Tacitus paints for us. Furthermore, it seems probable that the number of soldiers involved in the infliction of these indignities and, ultimately, in the execution of such high-ranking prisoners was also small. Individual ambition /

ambition combined with an absence of moral scruples were the qualities which dictated the choice for such duty. We may with some certainty conclude that there was no deliberate policy of exposing Praetorian guardsmen to service of this kind in order to brutalize them.

Indeed the preoccupation of our sources with such discreditable and ignominious activities should not allow us to lose sight of the fact that the main duties of the Praetorian cohorts remained to guarantee the stability of the government and the continuation of the regime and together with the German Guard, to ensure the safety of the emperor.

We have mixed evidence on Tiberius' attitude to the necessary presence of a Praetorian cohort. On those occasions when he felt confident and in control of a situation, he was happy that his Praetorians should adopt a low profile and remain in the background. When he went to court, at his mother's insistence, to lend moral support to Urgulania, her friend, he ordered his escort to follow him at a distance.⁶¹

When he visited sick friends, it was his practice to go into their rooms without his guards.⁶² It seems, therefore, reasonable to conclude that when Tiberius was among those whom he trusted, or when it was politically expedient for him to be seen to be trusting and unafraid, he was prepared to dismiss his Praetorian escort, or at least reduce its normal prominence. This is especially true of the earlier part of his principate before senile timidity began to affect him.

Even here, however, it is possible to detect a repugnance of physical contact - an attitude which demanded a high degree of vigilance on the part of his Praetorian guardsmen. Our sources tell us that Quintus Haterius, hoping to placate Tiberius after making an injudicious remark /

remark in the Senate, grasped the emperor's knees causing him to fall and was almost killed by the guards.⁶³ That unfortunate fisherman, who climbed up the cliffs at Capreae to present his emperor with his prize catch of a giant mullet could well testify to Tiberius' love of seclusion. The Praetorians, on Tiberius' orders, rubbed his face first with mullet, then with a crab.⁶⁴ It is no surprise to find that later in his reign, in AD. 28, when dedicating temples in Campania, Tiberius ordered Praetorian detachments to be posted in the towns of the region in order to prevent crowds.⁶⁵ By this time, of course, he had retired to Capreae and an obsession with privacy and protection dominated his life.

In return for this protection, Tiberius' reactions to the failures and mistakes of individual members of the Guard appear rather harsh. A soldier who stole a peacock from the imperial aviary was put to death. A centurion who led Tiberius' litter into the middle of a bramble thicket was beaten on the spot till he was almost dead.⁶⁶ We should not, perhaps, read too much into these incidents; contemporary military discipline was, as a rule, harsh and sometimes brutal. Yet one cannot help but feel that, especially after he took up residence on Capreae, the bonds between Tiberius and his Praetorians had somehow loosened a little.

There are several factors which may explain the increasing isolation of the emperor from his Guard. Firstly, it was simply not in Tiberius' nature to indulge his Praetorian cohorts or to flatter their vanity, as Claudius was to do later, by regularly acknowledging their worth /

worth and importance.⁶⁷ Ever-conscious of the dignity of his position, he expected and demanded loyalty from his guardsmen; he certainly felt no need to court it. At the same time he remained arrogantly indifferent to the strains which his own character, introverted and unforgiving, might be placing on his relationship with the Praetorians. If he feared plots, it was the plots of Agrippina and the dissident nobility. The possibility of Praetorian involvement in any conspiracy does not appear to have occurred to him until AD. 31. This assumption of loyalty allowed the emperor to devote himself to his main priority - the effective operation of the principate.

Which leads us to a second point. The workload thereby imposed rendered quite impossible any direct control by the emperor over the Praetorian cohorts. This was, of course, nothing new. Augustus had implicitly accepted, by his appointment of prefects in 2 BC., the limitations on his capacity to undertake personal supervision of the Guard.⁶⁸

Necessity produced the prefecture and its wise creator, aware of its dangerous potentiality, chose as his prefects men who were not only trustworthy and, occasionally, distinguished, but also dependent and controllable. Honourable service was rewarded handsomely but never excessively. The prefecture of Lucius Aelius Seianus was to change all of this.

Seianus rose from a notable background. His father was Lucius Seius Strabo, head of the equestrian order, and his brother, cousins and uncle were consuls.⁶⁹ His youth was spent in close contact with the great and powerful. He probably accompanied Gaius Caesar to the east in 1 BC. and may have met Tiberius when he crossed from Rhodes to abase himself /

himself before Gaius.⁷⁰ Perhaps he was shrewd enough to accord to the exile in his humiliation a respect which Julia's son neither felt for his step-father nor, along with the rest of his arrogant entourage, cared to feign. If so, it was a momentous calculation. Seianus' elevation was conspicuous and rapid. By AD. 14, when he accompanied Drusus to Pannonia, he was joint prefect with his father.⁷¹ The following year he became sole prefect when Strabo was promoted to the prefecture of Egypt.⁷² His influence over Tiberius grew steadily for he understood the emperor's prejudices and maliciously encouraged them, especially his hatred towards Agrippina.⁷³ Invaluable too was his help during the Pisonian affair.⁷⁴

A grateful Tiberius allowed Seianus to build a barracks beyond the Viminal hill and to assemble within its walls all nine Praetorian cohorts.⁷⁵ If we follow Syme in dating this development to AD. 20, it is clearly possible to link it with the threat posed to the stability of the regime by the return of Agrippina from the east and her popularity both within the Senate and among the wider populace of Rome.⁷⁶ Indeed Tacitus pictures Seianus candidly telling the emperor that, since the new arrangements would allow the Praetorians to project a collective menace in a manner quite impossible while they remained in scattered billets, the people of Rome would be able to be controlled and intimidated more easily.⁷⁷ In truth, however, the improvement in efficiency and discipline likely to ensue from the move was perhaps the determining factor.⁷⁸

It was this change which more than any other ensured that the Praetorians /

Praetorians were able to achieve their later dominant position in Roman political life. Although they were still a relatively minor element within the power structure that was the principate, the move provided the Praetorian cohorts with a sense of unity. The camp became the focal point of Praetorian power. Here emperors were made and unmade. Here the principates of Claudius and Otho were born, here the hopes of Nero and Galba died. Here too the presumptuous Nymphidius Sabinus paid the price for his imperial ambitions by his squalid death in a corner of a barrack-room. Seianus made all of this possible through his creation of the first unified military force permanently based in Rome and for this he may deservedly be called 'le vrai fondateur du prétoire, légitimant ainsi cet enfant d'Auguste jusque-là caché et mal reconnu'.⁷⁹

He remained the favourite of an emperor deluded and perhaps infatuated.⁸⁰ With Tiberius' support and blessing the prefect, now publicly termed 'socius laborum', developed the scope of his patronage.⁸¹ Seianus was not the man to spurn such an opportunity. Juvenal's claim that he controlled high military appointments may be a shameless exaggeration, but the political advancement of his friends and relations was certainly within his gift.⁸² Extravagant honours were granted.⁸³ The prefect's statue was installed in the theatre of Pompey after his successful deployment of the Praetorians during a fire there.⁸⁴ The fate of Cremutius Cordus served as a potent discouragement to indiscreet or garrulous critics of such indulgences.⁸⁵

But Seianus' ambitions were greater still. He had plans both personal and dynastic. His daughter was betrothed to the son of Claudius and, after /

after that unfortunate's death, another match was arranged - less grand perhaps, but, to an ageing princeps, of greater menace - to the son of Lentulus Gaetulicus who, in AD. 29, took command of the legions of Upper Germany.⁸⁶ With the dignity of his posterity now assured, Seianus could devote himself to more immediate aspirations. He had seduced Livilla, the wife of Drusus.⁸⁷ The latter's death advanced his hopes of an entry through marriage into the imperial family.⁸⁸ The princess was willing, the princeps less so. The request was refused though, to soften the blow, there was a hint of future advancement.⁸⁹ It was no empty promise. In the course of AD. 31 the prefect became betrothed to a member of the imperial family. Logic suggests Livilla, but the evidence of a later historian speaks for Julia, Livilla's daughter, and, since the previous year, the widow of Nero Caesar.⁹⁰

At the height of his career Seianus enjoyed immense power and influence.⁹¹ Yet all of that, even his very tenure of the prefecture, derived from and was dependent on the trust and friendship of Tiberius. The support which nobles like Gaetulicus were willing to provide for Seianus was opportunistic and qualified. It was expedient to court the prefect who could help their careers, but it was as the emperor's loyal servant that they courted him.⁹² He was their partner not their patron, their collaborator rather than their leader.⁹³ And for some, perhaps not a few, of these nobles a mask of specious admiration was a suitable device to conceal their own disdainful misgivings over the prefect's power. Tacitus' description of Seianus as a 'municipalis adulter',⁹⁴ is a cry of indignant outrage which reflects the prejudice of /

of much of the senatorial class towards the advancement of the equestrian favourite. The structure of power which Seianus had created around him was superficially impressive and soundly-based. In truth, a house built on sand.

The prefect was not unaware of this envy. Shrewdly he tried to turn it to his advantage. In a letter to Tiberius he claimed that the considerable enmity which he had provoked was a direct consequence of his actions on the emperor's behalf.⁹⁵ At best, a questionable assertion. But Tiberius believed it, or feigned belief. Seianus' enemies were not, however, deterred. During the crisis over the charges against Agrippina and Nero he was attacked openly in letters 'sub nominibus consularium fictae'.⁹⁶ But frontal assaults on the prefect were doomed to failure on the rock of the emperor's support for his favourite. Indeed, the deliberate provocation of such hostility is the hallmark of Seianus' technique.⁹⁷ For the slandering of Tiberius' minister could easily be represented, especially after the withdrawal of the emperor to Capreae in AD. 27, as an attack upon Tiberius himself.

The failure of such methods necessitated a new kind of approach. And a more subtle proponent. Asinius Gallus, eminent and cunning, took the lead in proposing most of the important honours conferred on Seianus on the occasion of his designation as consul with Tiberius himself as his colleague. His apparent friendship with the prefect provided the justification. But Gallus' zeal to be one of the envoys to congratulate the emperor roused Seianus' suspicions. He immediately complained /

complained to Tiberius that the proposals of Gallus were intended to foment trouble between the emperor and himself. Tiberius, no friend of Gallus, was receptive to this allegation. And so, a pleasurable duplicity. Gallus dined with the emperor on Capreae, while in the Senate an imperial letter denounced the legate for his jealousy of Tiberius' friendship with Seianus.⁹⁸ At the time the bond uniting princeps and prefect must have seemed unassailable. But the very vehemence with which Tiberius defended his protégé suggests an uncertainty. The seeds of doubt were starting to take root in that suspicious mind.

Perhaps Seianus sensed the emperor's uneasiness. He claimed a constituency - that of the urban plebs - and put himself forward as their champion. Precedents - Marius, Agrippa and, from the dim mists of history, Servius Tullius - were sought and advertised.⁹⁹ Assemblies, later condemned as 'improbae', were staged on the Aventine to provide the prefect's consulship with the popular support which he always seemed to lack.¹⁰⁰ But here lay great danger. Tiberius was no popularis. He had little sympathy for the urban proletariat. His heroes were not Tiberius or Gaius Gracchus, but their killers, Mucius Scaevola and Opimius. Clear evidence of the trouble which the Roman mob could cause had been provided by the demonstrations in favour of Agrippina and Nero in AD. 29.¹⁰¹ Tiberius had no wish to stir up this hornets' nest. Seianus' calls for plebeian solidarity were potentially destabilising. They were also unauthorised. And an independent prefect with political ambitions could not be tolerated.

Tiberius /

Tiberius himself claimed that he punished Seianus when he found out that the prefect was plotting against the children of Germanicus.¹⁰² Even the shallow Suetonius saw the flaw in this argument. The fall of Seianus did not bring the release either of Agrippina or of Drusus. But this is hardly surprising. Their offences were not nullified by the prefect's ruin. We may surmise that Seianus exceeded his instructions by encompassing Nero's death. It is more likely, however, that the offence which prompted the emperor to act was Seianus' moves against Gaius, the youngest of Germanicus' sons. Josephus tells us of a letter written by Antonia, the emperor's sister-in-law, outlining Seianus' misdeeds.¹⁰³ Certainly the young prince was called from his grandmother's house to Capreae and safety sometime after his eighteenth birthday on the 31st of August AD. 30.¹⁰⁴ It is not too fanciful to infer a link between Antonia's letter and the emperor's summons.

But if we accept that Tiberius became suspicious of his prefect in AD. 30, are we not then compelled to view their joint consulship as a ploy by the emperor to lull Seianus into a false sense of security?¹⁰⁵ Although such a thesis may, at first sight, seem far-fetched, deviousness of just this sort is widely attributed to Tiberius. We know, for example, that he made Scribonius Libo a praetor and invited him to dinner as he planned his destruction.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, perhaps this interpretation merely rationalises the emperor's tendency towards vacillation - a failing aggravated by age. By the following year, however, the messages from Capreae had become distinctly ambiguous. The prefect received further honours - proconsular power and a priesthood.¹⁰⁷ /

priesthood.¹⁰⁷ But the signs of imperial displeasure were also more evident. The unusual timing of the emperor's resignation from the joint consulship,¹⁰⁸ his refusal to let Seianus visit Campania,¹⁰⁹ the conspicuous advancement of Gaius,¹¹⁰ and the ban on sacrifices to anyone living¹¹¹ - all of these gave hope to the prefect's enemies and provoked disquiet among his friends.¹¹² A still clearer indication followed. Tiberius, keen to distance himself from any involvement in the death of Nero, omitted Seianus' titles in his letter to the Senate on the affair.¹¹³ The prefect, provoked by this cat and mouse game, tried to re-assert his authority within Rome. His agents brought an indictment against Lucius Arruntius, an inveterate enemy. The quashing of the case, which Dio Cassius attributes to Tiberius, provided clear evidence to all that Seianus' star was on the wane.¹¹⁴

Seianus had five months' grace after he was forced to give up his consulship.¹¹⁵ Tiberius had cause to hesitate. The Praetorians were widely held to be under Seianus' control and so, for the emperor's purposes, unreliable.¹¹⁶ Plans had to be laid, thoroughly and secretly. The consequences of failure were not ignored. A ship was made ready at Capreae to carry Tiberius to the east, probably to Syria where Aelius Lamia, the governor, had refused to display Seianus' statue beside that of the emperor.¹¹⁷

An agent was found to command the operation - Quintus Naevius Cordus Sutorius Macro, a former prefect of the Vigiles from Alba Fucens.¹¹⁸ Capable, ruthless and ambitious he was the man for the hour. His role was vital to the success of the entire enterprise.¹¹⁹ Firstly, he had to /

to detach the Praetorians from Seianus and get them back to their barracks. This was effected more easily than might have been anticipated. The prefect's escort, on being shown the emperor's warrant which Macro carried, promptly abandoned Seianus.¹²⁰ Their compliance may be seen as an instinctive reaction to orders from above. It is also possible that Macro, at one stage in his career, had held a tribunate in the Guard and was known personally by the soldiers. Secondly, it was vital that Seianus did not become suspicious while he was still in a position to send for help from the Praetorian camp. So Macro lied, perhaps on Tiberius' instructions. He told Seianus that he was about to be granted tribunician power.¹²¹ A shrewd deception, willingly believed by the ambitious prefect. Once inside the temple of Apollo where the Senate was meeting, his denunciation could safely be left to the consul, Memmius Regulus, and his arrest to Graecinus Laco and the Vigiles who had taken up positions around the temple.¹²² The third part of the plan demanded that Macro should follow Seianus' escort back to the Praetorian camp to ensure that the action against the prefect was presented to all the cohorts as a *fait accompli* and to prevent any Praetorian counter-coup in his favour.¹²³ Here lay real risk. Many of the tribunes and centurions owed their promotion to Seianus' patronage.¹²⁴ It was unclear how they would react to news of the prefect's ~~detection~~. There was, however, one certainty of which the emperor and his fellow conspirators were fully aware. If the Praetorian cohorts decided to make a united effort to rescue Seianus, the Vigiles could not withstand them and the coup would fail. Hence Macro's promise of rewards - the carrot to balance the stick of his imperial warrant.¹²⁵ It was bribery, blatant and shameful. But it worked. Greed and dynastic loyalty /

loyalty combined to deny the prefect the help which he might have expected. And while the Praetorians did nothing, Regulus was prompting a circumspect Senate to action.¹²⁶

The stunned Seianus was dragged off to prison, utterly rejected. The contrast between his former glory and his hopeless plight at this time is recorded by Dio.¹²⁷ Gone are the escorts, crowns, elaborate togas and sacrifices; in their place prison, bonds, blows and finally death. The Senate, after checking that no Praetorian counter-attack was imminent,¹²⁸ condemned him during a second meeting later on the same day in the temple of Concord. History forbade delay.¹²⁹ By evening the prefect had been strangled. His body was left for three days on the Gemonian Steps for the mob to abuse.¹³⁰

Tiberius omitted in his letter to the Senate any firm accusation that Seianus was plotting to murder him. But the prefect's speedy execution allowed the emperor to encourage the belief that such a plot had existed and to portray himself as a helpless victim.¹³¹ Who was there to gainsay this restructuring of history? Not the urban plebs who had been quick to show how little love they had for the wrecker of Germanicus' family.¹³² And certainly not the senators who had already made haste to distance themselves from the prefect even before Regulus had finished reading the emperor's letter.¹³³ This conspicuous repudiation of a fallen vizier may be understandable. Expediency dictates loyalties at such a time.

But the emperor's version of events attracted a wider credibility.

Josephus tells us categorically that there was a great conspiracy by Seianus /

Seianus, supported by most of the senators and a section of the army.¹³⁴ Suetonius also depicts Seianus as a revolutionary plotter and writes of the crushing of the conspiracy.¹³⁵ Tacitus' account of this period is sorely missed. However his description of the fate of the prefect's associates in the aftermath of his execution is instructive. He tells us how P. Vitellius felt compelled to kill himself after he was accused of a readiness to provide Seianus with funds for 'res novae'.¹³⁶ Similar accusations and their diverse outcomes are mentioned elsewhere by the same historian.¹³⁷ The assumption must be that Tacitus believed that there was a conspiracy by the prefect. Dio Cassius, on the other hand, is wary about alleged conspiracies.¹³⁸ Indeed he states in two places that Seianus did not form a conspiracy in AD. 31.¹³⁹ He may, however, have been influenced in his approach to Seianus' fall by the ruin, in AD. 205, of Fulvius Plautianus, Septimius Severus' Praetorian prefect. He specifically draws the parallel.¹⁴⁰ Since he knew that Plautianus was the victim of a *σκευωρημα*, it is arguable that he may not have given fair consideration to any evidence which suggested that Seianus had conspired.¹⁴¹

Did the prefect in fact conspire?¹⁴² I think not. He is alleged to have regretted not acting while he held the consulship.¹⁴³ Afterwards, in his final few months, he may have tried in desperation to rally his partisans. Hence the 'novissimum consilium' to which Marcus Terentius alludes.¹⁴⁴ This reference may suggest that Seianus did indulge in some hopeless intriguing. But there is more in Terentius' speech which merits our attention. He admits his friendship with /

with Seianus, but denies any involvement in a plot. It may be argued, of course, that such a denial is predictable and indicative of nothing more than Terentius' cunning. But his apologia is convincing. And, if Seianus did not include a man like Terentius who openly advertised his friendship with the prefect, then any circle of conspirators must have been very small.

We may also wonder what this alleged conspiracy hoped to achieve. The idea that the removal of Tiberius was the aim is ludicrous. The emperor's survival provided a better guarantee of Seianus' continuing advancement than that loose alliance of opportunists who had attached themselves to his coat-tails as he rose. Terentius tells the Senate candidly that he courted Seianus because the prefect enjoyed the emperor's favour. Such men, and the majority of Seianus' partisans were just such men, do not make revolutions. They seek to use the system, not replace it. Seianus did not conspire, not only because he was confident of the emperor's friendship, at least until the middle of AD. 31, but also because he was wholly aware that any such plot was unlikely to succeed. The only plot was the emperor's plot, the first victim his friend and prefect.

In retrospect it is clear that Seianus' rise was just an episode, the result of his loyalty as Praetorian prefect, with^{out} involving any attempt to break the traditional framework of the aristocratic state.¹⁴⁵

Indeed, Seianus was eager to become part of that dominant oligarchy rather than to supplant it with a more absolutist regime. And if his rise showed the potential rewards to which the holder of the Praetorian prefecture /

prefecture could aspire, his fall proved only too clearly the limitations of that post.

As for the Praetorians themselves, they must, despite the bribes which Tiberius felt compelled to offer them,¹⁴⁶ have been aware that their emperor had felt that they were not loyal enough to be entrusted with the arrest of Seianus. *Fides, ut anima, unde abiit eo numquam redit.*¹⁴⁷ The bonds of mutual dependency which united emperor and Guard may not have been completely broken, but they had certainly been loosened. A period of conspicuous loyalty by both parties was now necessary. But a dangerous, even ruinous, precedent had been created. Praetorian favour was now seen to be a marketable commodity. And it must surely have occurred to the Praetorians that, if they could get a thousand denarii for doing nothing, still greater prizes might be gained by action.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRAETORIAN GUARD FROM THE DEATH OF SEIANUS TO THE ASSASSINATION OF GAIUS

The downfall of Seianus was the beginning of a period of unremitting vileness in the conduct of affairs of state. The Praetorian prefect was himself but the first to die. In the days after the 18th of October, and perhaps even up to December when Seianus' younger children were executed in sickening circumstances,¹ Rome witnessed a witch-hunt in which a number of the prefect's family and friends were put to death.² We may here detect Tiberius' vindictive hand. He remained implacably malevolent towards those accused of friendship with the prefect.³ Tacitus writes of an 'immensa strages' in AD. 33 of all those, including women and children, still held in custody on the charge of complicity with Seianus.⁴ The emperor had shown by his action against Seianus how much value should be attached to former friendships. His lead was followed. Past loyalties were expediently renounced, old enmities viciously recalled as the prefect's associates vied to accuse each other of treason.⁵ Suicides were common, motivated as often by desperation as by any sense of guilt.⁶ Moreover it would be naive to assume that the organisers of the coup, Tiberius and perhaps Gaius, or their agents Macro and Laco, were above using the opportunity provided by it to eliminate some of their personal enemies who had little or no connection with Seianus.⁷

And what of the Guard itself during this bloodbath? Although Macro had prevented the Praetorians from launching a counter-coup to rescue Seianus, he was not able to restrain them completely. They went on
the /

the rampage, burning and plundering in anger, according to Dio Cassius, that the Vigiles had been preferred to themselves.⁸ Logic suggests that the targets of this rage were Seianus' family and friends and that the motivation was a desire by the Praetorians to provide proof to the emperor of their zealous loyalty.⁹ However a wise historian should be wary of attributing logic to soldiers under stress. The Praetorians' actions at this time may well have been limited to a disorganised participation in the general looting and crime common on such occasions.

After this lapse, however, the Praetorians assessed their situation with soldierly realism. Seianus was dead and they held the rewards for the neutrality which had permitted his demise.¹⁰ There could be little profit in further disruption. In truth there was no alternative to the sedulous service which they gave to Tiberius during the remaining six years of his principate. We know that they lined the banks of the Tiber when the emperor sailed up as far as the pleasure grounds near Julius Caesar's artificial lake and escorted him during his apparently capricious odyssey to numerous villas through Campania.¹¹ They also played their part in the further persecution of Seianus' adherents. At the end of AD. 32 a Praetorian centurion led a detachment of men to the area around Rhegium to bring back Rubrius Fabatus who was allegedly trying to flee to the Parthians to avoid a charge of conspiracy.¹² Tiberius may not have inspired devotion. Indeed it seems probable that, even allowing for rotation of service, only a very limited number of Praetorians actually saw him during his seclusion on Capreae and on his jaunts to the mainland. But the Guard needed an emperor and Seianus' fate stood as an intimidating confirmation of Tiberius' undisputed /

undisputed tenure of that office.

But Rome held little attraction for Tiberius. He was, however, anxious to maintain the fiction that circumstances rather than his own desires prevented his return.¹³ To this end he made much of the alleged threat to his security posed by the remnants of Seianus' party.¹⁴ It was an elaborate charade which deceived at least one senator. Togonius Gallus suggested that Tiberius choose a number of senators, twenty of whom, chosen by lot, would provide a guard for the emperor in the Senate.¹⁵ Tiberius was not displeased but he preferred to ask that Macro together with some tribunes and centurions of the Guard escort him in the Senate.¹⁶ Other senators may have understood Tiberius' duplicity better. But conformity was the only guarantee of survival. Dio Cassius records no dissent from the resolution which allowed the Praetorians to search senators for hidden weapons as they entered the senate-house.¹⁷

Tiberius may, as Dio Cassius alleges, have been eager to assure the Guard of his good-will towards them.¹⁸ But it was not disinterested generosity. He was determined to retain in his own hands control over the allocation of benefits to the Praetorians and to remain the focus of their gratitude. Hence his unrelenting wrath when Junius Gallio proposed that the Praetorians should, on completing their service, have the right to sit in the fourteen rows of the theatre reserved for the equites. The fury of Tiberius' response arguably reflects his own uncertainty over the loyalty of the Praetorians. Gallio was accused of usurping the emperor's prerogative and branded a 'satelles Seiani' - a damning charge. The Senate understood their duty and expelled Gallio from/

from membership.¹⁹

And so to Macro! His skill in ensuring the success of the action against Seianus earned him the Praetorian prefecture which he was to hold for the next seven years.²⁰ We know his full name, Quintus Naevius Cordus Sutorius Macro, from two commemorative plaques found at the amphitheatre of his native Alba Fucens which he left to the townspeople in his will. The same inscriptions tell us that he had been prefect of the Vigiles.²¹ It was perhaps at this stage of his career that Tiberius saw the possibility of using him to counter the ambitions of Seianus.²² But we know nothing of Macro's activities between his tenure of this prefecture and his appointment to the Praetorian prefecture.²³ De Visscher suggests that Macro had been 'l'oeil de Capri' at Rome for some time before October AD. 31.²⁴

The character of Macro remains something of an enigma. Tacitus describes him as worse than Seianus at inflicting criminal damage on the state.²⁵ Dio Cassius portrays him as a torturer and extractor of confessions during the purge which followed Seianus' death.²⁶ Both of these historians allege that Macro persuaded his wife, Ennia, to seduce Gaius as a means of gaining a greater hold over the young prince.²⁷ The prefect stands accused of brutal crimes against the state, of the relentless persecution of individuals and of a ruthless ambition unhindered by moral considerations. Such allegations are damning. Whether they are justified is distinctly less clear. If we examine these charges more carefully, we find that Tacitus not only misrepresents Macro's actions but also distorts his motives.

Let /

Let us consider firstly the involvement of the new prefect in torture. We have already noted that he took part in interrogations after the death of Seianus. In addition to this Tacitus tells us that suspicions existed during the prosecution in AD. 37 of Albucilla and her alleged lovers, including Lucius Arruntius, that the evidence against them had been fabricated by Macro. To support this claim he cites the absence of the usual accompanying letter from the emperor to the Senate and Macro's direction of the questioning and torture of slaves.²⁸ The implication is that the presence of the Praetorian prefect was exceptional and indicative of a deeper corruption. Tigellinus' participation in the torture of suspects shows that attendance on such occasions was not limited to one particular prefect.²⁹ Moreover, surely, given the seriousness of the charge against Albucilla, impietas in principem, the absence of the prefect during the questioning would have been more surprising? Tacitus adduces a personal motivation for Macro's involvement - his hatred of Arruntius. A less subjective interpretation of the prefect's conduct suggests itself. The interrogation of witnesses in cases touching upon the emperor's security and dignity was the perceived duty of the Praetorian prefect. Tacitus provides us with a vindictive scoundrel. A more likely assessment reveals a conscientious champion of the imperial interest.

But what of Macro the pimp whom Tacitus claims put his wife into Gaius' bed? It is not disputed that Gaius and Ennia were lovers. More open to question is Macro's role in the affair. Philo states categorically that the prefect was unaware of his wife's infidelity. In /

In this account and that of Suetonius it is Gaius who takes the initiative in the seduction to ensure Ennia's help in persuading her husband to support his imperial aspirations.³⁰ This explanation of Gaius' motive, however, does not persuade. The seduction of a man's wife seems a particularly perverse method of winning his favour.³¹ Besides, Macro had already been acting in the prince's interest for several years. Indeed it may not be going too far to suggest that Macro believed that his own survival depended on Gaius obtaining the principate. A more convincing interpretation must be sought. Perhaps the intrigue was of a purely sexual nature. If so, it was a potentially dangerous *divertissement*; or perhaps, if Gaius had an ulterior motive, the person whose backing he was indirectly seeking was not Ennia's husband, but her father Thrasyllus, Tiberius' favourite astrologer.³² We know that in AD. 36 Thrasyllus assured Tiberius that he would live for ten more years.³³ This prediction may have influenced the emperor's decision not to accelerate the advancement of Tiberius Gemellus, his grandson - an oversight which worked to Gaius' considerable benefit.³⁴ The acceptance of this thesis must lead us to the reasonable conclusion that Tacitus' allegation is without substance.

As to those crimes to which Tacitus makes Lucius Arruntius allude we may note Macro's involvement in the suicides of Mamercus Scaurus in AD. 34 and Fulcinius Trio in AD. 35.³⁵ In truth, however, it is clear that both men had been living on borrowed time since Seianus' fall and that Tiberius' relentless persecution of the prefect's friends was probably the real reason for their deaths. The scandal of Albucilla was linked through her husband to the alleged conspiracy of /

of Seianus³⁶ - a serious enough consideration even six years after the prefect's ruin.³⁷ But the principal target of the action can hardly have been Albucilla. The key to understanding Macro's motives lies, not in the past, but in the future. Tiberius' death could not be long delayed. The issue of the succession was vital, and unresolved. The emperor's doubts over the suitability of Gaius to follow him had never been wholly allayed.³⁸ This hesitation had been noted by a powerful coalition headed by Lucius Arruntius which perhaps hoped to set Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus on the throne after Tiberius' death. Such aspirations were a direct threat to the accession of Gaius. Here lies the reason for Macro's action. By accusing these men of having been Albucilla's lovers and by associating them in the charge against her he could place the coalition on the defensive and safeguard the position of his protégé.³⁹

Macro was, in general, highly protective of Gaius with regard to both his personal safety and his morals. Philo tells us that he woke him up if he fell asleep at banquets and restrained his urge for theatrical excess.⁴⁰ Such devotion did not always please Tiberius⁴¹ though the prefect was able to cite his role in the downfall of Seianus as proof of his loyalty.⁴² But none of this should mislead us. Macro's support for Gaius was undertaken with a keen eye to his own advantage. He had a shrewd understanding of how to extract the greatest political benefit for himself out of any situation. We know from Dio Cassius that he sensibly declined the considerable rewards which the Senate voted him after Seianus' execution.⁴³ A similar circumspection can be found in the preferential treatment which he accorded to Herod Agrippa /

Agrippa, after he had been arrested for suggesting that it was time for Tiberius to retire in favour of Gaius. That unsavoury and frequently indigent princeling, for whom the imperial family had such a fascinated regard, was, although chained to a Praetorian centurion, permitted certain comforts denied to his fellow prisoners.⁴⁴ The extension of such privileges to a friend of Gaius suggests a readiness on Macro's part to disobey, or at least amend, Tiberius' orders when he saw the opportunity to gain future favour by doing so. His loyalty to Gaius was perhaps also shaped by a realistic assessment of his own position and a recognition that his hold over the Guard was unlikely to remain firm against the will of a child of Germanicus.

Tiberius died in his villa at Misenum on the 16th of March AD. 37.⁴⁵ The precise cause of his death remains unclear. There were wild rumours of poison and of strangulation.⁴⁶ Speculation is the frequent concomitant of a tyrant's end. Tacitus unsurprisingly implicates Macro. But the picture which he paints of the prefect ordering the suffocation of the emperor under a pile of bed-clothes seems improbable and unconvincing.⁴⁷ The evidence points to a more prosaic demise. Tacitus writes of Tiberius' failing respiration and a stoppage in his breathing.⁴⁸ Suetonius mentions a pain in the emperor's side and the onset of a fever after exposure to a draught.⁴⁹ He also indicates that a deterioration in his condition prevented him from returning to Capreae.⁵⁰ All three of our main sources tell us that Tiberius stopped breathing before apparently recovering.⁵¹ Finally, we know from Seneca who wrote his account within four years of Tiberius' death that the emperor collapsed and died after he tried to get out of bed on his own.⁵² All of this suggests that Tiberius died not at the hands of /

of Macro but of bronchial pneumonia which developed into pleurisy.⁵³

Macro may not have murdered Tiberius but his support for Gaius at the time of the old emperor's death was invaluable. Indeed the smoothness of the succession was largely due to the prefect's initiative. He despatched couriers to the legions, perhaps even before Tiberius' death.⁵⁴ He may also have hailed Gaius as emperor and ensured that the naval units at Misenum and those Praetorian detachments on the Campanian mainland did likewise.⁵⁵ It was the prefect who read out Tiberius' will to the Senate. His presence was perhaps the decisive factor in persuading the Senate to declare the will, which named Gaius and Tiberius Gemellus as joint-heirs, void due to Tiberius' insanity. Gaius was voted all the powers associated with the principate.⁵⁶

At first Gaius relied heavily on his prefect for support and advice. He is alleged to have refused to see even Antonia, his grandmother, except in Macro's presence.⁵⁷ The prefect also provided help of a more sinister kind. It was he who organised the death of Tiberius Gemellus. His agents were a Praetorian tribune and centurion who forced the prince to suicide.⁵⁸ But Gaius' debt to Macro was becoming increasingly offensive and intolerable to his heightened sense of imperial dignity. Philo tells us that Gaius grew weary of the prefect's admonitions. Certainly the emperor made evident his distaste for the prefect's company. He instructed his friends not to smile when Macro appeared. He contrasted publicly his own distinguished ancestry with that of the prefect. This clearly speaks of estrangement.⁵⁹

Since /

Since imperial disfavour frequently had fatal repercussions, Macro's enforced suicide would hardly surprise us were it not for our knowledge of his designation, in AD. 38, as prefect of Egypt in succession to Avillius Flaccus.⁶⁰ We must assume that this promotion was either a ruse, like the honours given to Seianus seven years earlier, to lull Macro into a false sense of security, or that it was a genuine advancement for the prefect and that, between the appointment and his departure for Egypt, a ruinous rift occurred in his relationship with Gaius. Neither interpretation is particularly attractive. Gaius was widely popular in AD. 38 and there would have been little need, if he wished to remove Macro, to indulge in such an elaborate and dangerous deception. It may well be, however, that the emperor felt that the strength of Macro's power-base within the Guard demanded that his elimination be delayed until his direct link with the Praetorians had been broken. As to the suggestion that the rupture occurred after his designation as prefect of Egypt, we have no indication from our sources of any activity on Macro's part at this time which would require an immediate response from the emperor. We do, however, have epigraphic evidence which may point to the involvement of Isidorus, the Alexandrian anti-semite, in Macro's ruin.⁶¹ It would, moreover, be unwise to ignore what Philo

tells us about the influence of the Egyptians of Gaius' household, especially Helicon whom he describes as τὴν τοῦ κατακοιμιστοῦ καὶ κατ' οἰκίαν ἀρχισωματοφύλακος τεταγμένος τᾶς ἐν.⁶²

It seems possible, therefore, that Macro's fall was engineered, for political reasons on which we can only speculate, by those Alexandrian nationalists close to Gaius who perhaps used as their pretext the friendship of Macro with Avillius Flaccus, his predecessor in Egypt and a /

a known partisan of Tiberius Gemellus.⁶³

It is not wholly clear whether the prefecture was split between two appointees immediately after Macro's death. Dio Cassius mentions the presence of only one prefect at Drusilla's funeral.⁶⁴ We know that there were two prefects in AD. 40, two years later.⁶⁵ One of these was almost certainly Marcus Arrencinus Clemens whom Tacitus claims was an outstanding appointment.⁶⁶ It may well be that only one prefect was appointed after Macro's suicide but that a second was introduced later, perhaps in the autumn of AD. 39 before Gaius set off for Germany.

As for the Praetorians themselves, they were delighted by the accession of Gaius. Their devotion to the house of Germanicus had a rather mystical quality about it. Gaius knew the importance of cultivating such loyalty. He visited the Praetorian camp with a retinue of senators and presented each soldier with 1000 sesterces as a donative from himself in addition to the 1000 sesterces which Tiberius had left them in his will.⁶⁷ It was perhaps at this time that the Praetorians received those specially-struck bronze coins which bear the legend 'adlocutio cohortium' and show Gaius addressing the assembled guardsmen.⁶⁸

Under Augustus and Tiberius the Praetorians had never hesitated to take the most drastic action against those individuals or groups which threatened the security of the emperor. Their remorseless and unquestioning commitment to the regime was to characterise much of Gaius' principate. Philo provides us with an insight into the operational consequences of such fealty in his account of the detention, exile and execution of Aulus Avillius Flaccus, prefect of Egypt since AD. 32. He was arrested on /

on an unknown charge by Bassus, a Praetorian centurion, who had been sent out from Italy by Gaius.⁶⁹ Praetorians may also have been involved in escorting Flaccus to Andros, the Greek island chosen as his place of exile. It is noteworthy, though scarcely surprising, given the increasing number of those exiled on imperial orders, that this escort did not stay on the island with their prisoner but merely introduced him to the popular assembly of the Andrians and called on them to witness the arrival of an exile.⁷⁰ After Gaius decided that Andros was too pleasant a spot for a treacherous ex-prefect, Praetorian executioners were despatched to put him to death - an action which Philo tells us they carried out with horrifying butchery and questionable competence.⁷¹

Whether Gaius had at this time reached that state of pathological madness which allegedly characterised the closing period of his principate is unclear.⁷² It is reasonable, however, to assume that the Praetorians were aware of the emperor's declining mental condition as reflected in his exhibitions of dancing and acting and in his habit of dressing as a god.⁷³ Nevertheless the Praetorians remained loyal to Gaius for another two and a half years and, even then, the plot against him did not involve the whole *Praetorian corps* but only a small group of officers. Why such persistent fidelity? Perhaps because of their oath of loyalty. Perhaps also because of Gaius' status as a son of Germanicus. One should never, however, underestimate the mercenary motivation of soldiers. Gaius' generosity towards the Praetorians and his role as a guarantor of their future employment were probably more important factors in ensuring their loyalty. As we have seen, even the removal of their prefect did not threaten the Praetorians' /

Praetorians' unique relationship with the emperor. They may have become murderers rather than soldiers, as Cassius Chaerea claimed, but the mass of the Praetorians were less fastidious in such matters and, provided Gaius made no move to curtail their privileges, their loyalty was guaranteed.⁷⁴

Gaius had never been slow to utilise his Guard as an instrument of repression although his motives in doing so may have been at least initially, less base than Dio Cassius suggests.⁷⁵ However the death of Drusilla, at whose funeral the Praetorians played a prominent part, liberated Gaius of the only influence capable of restraining his more violent impulses and wilder flights of fancy.⁷⁶ If our sources may be believed, something very close to a reign of terror developed in Rome with random arrests on the flimsiest of pretexts and the public humiliation of potential dissidents.⁷⁷ As the emperor's agents in this intimidation the Praetorians did their duty whether it involved provoking a deadly panic among a crowd whose noise as they waited for free tickets for the theatre had disturbed the imperial rest or stripping and whipping a quaestor accused of conspiracy.⁷⁸

But the Praetorians were more than just Gaius' bullyboys. They enhanced the dignity of an emperor obsessed with grandiose and ostentatious spectacle. They were the rock on which his vainglorious pretensions were built - the solid support for his exhibitionist posturings. To this end they took part in the parade, during the spring of AD. 39, over the bridge which Gaius had built from Puteoli to Misenum.⁷⁹ To many of the Praetorians the parade and the drunken party which followed it must have seemed a jolly jape, a fine example of /

of the *ὑδίατρεψία* of which their emperor was so proud.⁸⁰ Many of the Praetorian officers, however, may have taken a less indulgent view of such megalomania.⁸¹

Hardly less degrading and humiliating was the Praetorians' experience during Gaius' expedition to Gaul and Germany.⁸² The pace of the march northwards, during which approximately 966 miles were covered in 46 days, was so rapid and so exhausting that the Praetorians were forced to use pack-animals for their standards.⁸³ More farce followed when they eventually reached Germany. The Praetorian cavalry accompanied Gaius as he dashed around warding off fictitious attacks and capturing imaginary enemies.⁸⁴ Melodrama, however, sometimes gave way to real tragedy. In Germany, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, who had been the husband of one of Gaius' sisters, Drusilla, and was now the lover of another, Agrippina, was decapitated by the axe of the Praetorian tribune, Dexter, Gaius' favourite executioner. Here may be the consequences of failed conspiracy between Lepidus and Lentulus Gaetulicus, the powerful commander of the legions in upper Germany who was also put to death at this time.⁸⁵ The whole episode illustrates well the extent to which Gaius relied on the Praetorians for his protection and security. This dependency did not go unnoticed by some malcontents within the Praetorian officer corps who saw in it an opportunity to exact retribution for past insults and rid Rome of a tyrant.

The suppression of Gaetulicus' plot served only to increase Gaius' paranoia. The declarations of thanksgiving which greeted the emperor's return /

return to Rome were soon forgotten as he used the Praetorians to unleash a new and widespread terror on the city.⁸⁶ Fresh conspiracies were detected and crushed,⁸⁷ women tortured,⁸⁸ force used to impose unpopular and sometimes ludicrous taxes on the populace.⁸⁹ Protesters were ruthlessly dealt with.⁹⁰ As the antipathy of the urban plebs towards Gaius grew, the swords of the Praetorians became more patently the sole support of his principate.⁹¹ It is an indication of Gaius' madness that, instead of cherishing his Guard at this time, he chose to give them orders and duties that were increasingly infantile and humiliating. They were sent into the streets to ensure that the sleep of Incitatus, the emperor's favourite horse, was not disturbed.⁹² They were forced to admire Milonia Caesonia, Gaius' fourth wife, as she rode beside him dressed in a military cloak and helmet and carrying a shield.⁹³ A Praetorian centurion was sent by Gaius to order a knight who had made a noise during a performance by Mnester to take a pointless message to Mauretania.⁹⁴ Such needless insensitivity offended the Praetorians and convinced some that only the emperor's death would bring to an end a situation which was widely regarded as unbearable.⁹⁵

Everyone was now suspect, to the extent that Gaius felt that he needed an armed guard of Praetorians in the Senate.⁹⁶ Even the prefects fell under suspicion after the vengeful accusation of Betilienus Bassus' father against them.⁹⁷ This predictably produced further melodramatic posturing from Gaius. More ominously he began to try to stir up trouble between the prefects who recognised in Gaius' suspicions a threat to their very lives.⁹⁸ Josephus rightly points out that it was /

was fear of an uncertain future as much as a desire to avenge past wrongs that persuaded many if not to join, at least not to prevent the coup against Gaius.⁹⁹

The initiator and organiser of the plot, Cassius Chaerea, had, however, more personal motives for acting against his emperor. Gaius had persistently humiliated the tribune who had come to the Praetorian Guard after a long career in the legions.¹⁰⁰ Chaerea was pompous, aloof and, because of his soft voice, open to charges of being a homosexual.¹⁰¹ Gaius with his love of immature pranks was not the man to ignore such vulnerabilities. The tribune was given obscene and salacious passwords which he was compelled as officer of the watch to pass on to his subordinates.¹⁰² It was a pleasure which was to cost Gaius dearly. For Chaerea understood that there could be no end to his degradation while the emperor lived. Not only was his tribunate an ongoing humiliation but his prospects of obtaining a worthwhile post at the end of his period of service lay in ruins. And so out of his desperation was born a deadly conspiracy.

There is, however, another interpretation of Chaerea's motives which reflects much less well on the tribune. He had, by his own admission, been deeply involved in the torture and general terror which characterised the last year of Gaius' principate. He may well have judged that only by killing Gaius could he escape the opprobrium which such collaboration merited. Indeed, his reluctance to seize several favourable opportunities to kill the emperor because they would have meant the sacrifice of his own life suggests that Chaerea's thirst for /

for vengeance was definitely limited and qualified by his desire for survival.¹⁰³

Chaerea first sought the support of Clemens. But the prefect was too shrewd to commit himself beyond platitudinous sympathy.¹⁰⁴

He had more luck, however, with his fellow-tribunes¹⁰⁵, but he was eager that the coup should be more broadly-based than the officer corps of the Guard. He therefore approached Lucius Annius Vinicianus whom he believed represented the interests of the Senate.¹⁰⁶ Chaerea wanted swift action. He was worried that Clemens might decide that his own advantage would be better served by revealing the conspiracy to Gaius. Knowledge of the existence of a plot had, moreover, become dangerously widespread.¹⁰⁷ Delay could only increase the possibility of detection.¹⁰⁸ A final factor prompting Chaerea towards early action was Gaius' plans to tour Egypt.¹⁰⁹

The day chosen for the murder of Gaius was the 24th of January AD. 41 during the festival of the Ludi Palatini.¹¹⁰ On that day Gaius, after some persuading by Asprenas, left the theatre by the covered route to the palace.¹¹¹ According to Suetonius and Dio Cassius, the emperor believed that he was to meet a group of noble boys from Ionia who were to appear at the festival.¹¹² Josephus maintains that he was taking a shortcut to the palace baths.¹¹³ In the tunnel was waiting Chaerea together with at least two other Praetorian tribunes, Cornelius Sabinus and Aquila. Suetonius gives us two versions of the actual killing, according to one of which Chaerea aimed the first blow at Gaius' neck, while in the other Sabinus struck first and /

and broke Gaius' jawbone.¹¹⁴ Both Suetonius and Dio Cassius agree that the other conspirators then ran forward to wound the emperor.¹¹⁵ In the account of Josephus, Chaerea stopped Gaius, asked him for the watchword and then struck him, whereupon Sabinus knocked him to his knees before Aquila delivered the fatal blow.¹¹⁶

The assassination was followed by a period of chaotic bloodiness. Sabinus, the Thracian gladiator in charge of the German Guard, completely lost control of his men.¹¹⁷ A similar loss of discipline began to affect the Praetorian cohort on duty.¹¹⁸ There was for a time the distinct possibility of a wholesale massacre. Indeed it was only with difficulty that Chaerea was able to re-establish some order.¹¹⁹ To his relief Vinicianus was found unharmed. The senator was brought to Clemens who, in a tardy gesture of commitment to the conspiracy, judged it expedient to release him.¹²⁰

The conspirators, deluded by their own prejudices in thinking that, in murdering a tyrant, they had eradicated a tyranny, boasted publicly of their part in the assassination, confident that Rome's destiny was in their hands.¹²¹ Some, notably Vinicianus, had their own ambitions in which the Praetorians might have a part to play;¹²² but the majority shared the simple and naive belief that the death of Gaius would by itself usher in a new republican golden age. They had assumed, if in truth they had seriously considered the question, that the Praetorian Guard would react to the assassination of Gaius with no greater disruption than they had shown after the death of Seianus ten years before.¹²³ It was to prove a ruinous miscalculation. In the castra /

castra praetoria there were 11 cohorts who were wholly aware that the continuance of their privileged existence demanded a new emperor.

Even within Chaerea's own cohort there were men who, amidst the confusion following the emperor's murder, understood that there could be no place in the new republican Utopia for a Praetorian Guard.¹²⁴

It is possible that, if the Praetorians had known at this time of Vinicianus' aspirations, they would have supported him. But this is perhaps to underestimate their loyalty to the dynasty.¹²⁵

The previous ten years had, however, seen the male line of the ruling house all but annihilated through the pitiless vindictiveness of Tiberius and Gaius. Who then was left to provide a focus for the Praetorians' loyalty? Behind a curtain in the imperial palace hid a man whose life had been a long catalogue of humiliations. He was of unprepossessing appearance and widely considered to be an imbecile.¹²⁶

But he was the brother of Germanicus. And for the Praetorians this in itself made him worthy of their allegiance.¹²⁷

CHAPTER IV

THE PRAETORIAN GUARD OF CLAUDIUS

The tyrant's death was not enough for Chaerea. In a shameful and unnecessary act of butchery Gaius' wife, Caesonia, and his daughter, Drusilla, were put to death. The commission of this atrocity was entrusted to a Praetorian tribune, Julius Lupus.¹ He was picked to carry out this distasteful task for several reasons. Firstly, Chaerea was not so well supplied with ruthless lieutenants that he could afford to be discriminating. Secondly, and, in its immediate context, more importantly, those in charge of the conspiracy hoped that, by choosing Lupus, they would compromise Marcus Arrecinus Clemens, one of the Praetorian prefects, to whom Lupus was closely related.² They need not have taken so much trouble, for Clemens, by his encouragement of Chaerea, by his obloquy of tyranny and by his collusion with conspirators after the assassination, had already hopelessly implicated himself in the plot and left himself open to allegations of, at best, dereliction of duty and, at worst, outright treachery made, perhaps even more reprehensible by his hypocritical willingness to encourage, but not participate in, the conspiracy.³ Lupus, conscious that support for the murders which he was about to commit was by no means unanimous⁴ and surely aware of the opprobrium likely to attach itself to such an act, steeled himself with the knowledge that he was acting for his country⁵ and, after finding Caesonia weeping over Gaius' body, killed both her and Drusilla, her daughter, with a taciturn cold-bloodedness.⁶

Meanwhile, the Senate, at the instigation of the consuls, Cn. Sentius Saturninus /

Saturninus and Q. Pomponius Secundus, acted, in the immediate aftermath of the killing, with uncharacteristic determination and authority. A meeting was called on the Capitol, which was more easily defended than the Curia.⁷ A considerable sum of money was moved to the same place and protected by a guard of senators and soldiers.⁸ Over-confidence,⁹ hyperbole¹⁰ and melodramatic posturing¹¹ were the order of the day. There was much emphasis on the glory of tyrannicide and on the need to restore the republic.¹² Almost inevitably the watchword 'Libertas' was given to Cassius Chaerea who, although normally unloved and unloving, was allegedly enjoying a brief Indian summer of popularity, and had control of the limited military forces, mainly the urban cohorts, which had placed themselves at the Senate's disposal.¹³

Yet, despite Sentius' rhetorical skill¹⁴ and Chaerea's organisational ability,¹⁵ the Senate's position was clearly untenable from the start. As Momigliano writes, 'when we look for the political programme that underlay the vague appeals to a better order, we find that no such programme existed'.¹⁶ For all the brave talk of liberty and of restoring the republic, what many senators really wanted was a revival of the senatorial oligarchy which had been discredited, at least as far as fitness for government was concerned, over one hundred years before. Such selfish aims, however prettified, were unlikely to win the approval of other elements of Roman society, even those who were less than wholehearted in their support for the imperial system.

Neither the people, whose support was, from the Senate's point of view, of no great importance, nor the army, whose backing was vital, was likely /

likely to welcome an aristocratic government.¹⁷ Shrewder minds in the Senate, of course, realised this.¹⁸ But nowhere was it more clearly recognised and nowhere was the opposition to it more sharply focused or more concretely organised than among the Praetorian cohorts.

The consuls, realising the dangers inherent in allowing the temporarily stunned Praetorians to roam without control through the city, ordered those in the city to return to their camp and stay there. To encourage this, they held out the promise of rewards.¹⁹ Their fears about possible plundering were, especially after the reaction of the German Guard to the assassination, understandable and undoubtedly genuine, and yet their anxieties may well also have had their origins in the threat to their own position which would arise if the Praetorians were to make common cause with the people who had failed singularly to understand the role which they were expected to play in this matter and, after a meeting in the forum, were, to the annoyance and embarrassment of the Senate, eager to mount a full investigation into Gaius' murder.²⁰ The consuls, however, knew how to deal with popular unrest. The people, who, without weapons, were hardly a threat to the senatorial position, were peremptorily dismissed to their homes and a curfew brought into force.²¹ The Praetorians, however, paid little heed to the Senate's directive. They had already committed themselves elsewhere. Those cohorts in the Viminal camp had held a meeting²² where they had decided that they had no confidence whatsoever in a government of a senatorial oligarchy.²³ They wanted an emperor not only as 'a guarantor of their continued employment',²⁴ (for how, even allowing for the consuls' promises,²⁵ could an Imperial Guard exist without an emperor?), but also perhaps /

perhaps because they, as the military voice of middle-class Italy,²⁶ knew well the benefits and privileges which they had gained under the empire and how those might be curtailed by the rapacity of an aristocratic government.

Once they had rejected oligarchy, it only remained for the Praetorians to decide to whom they should give their support and backing as princeps. They needed to act quickly, for they feared that if they delayed too long, the Senate might put forward a candidate of its own who, if he gained the principate without Praetorian support, would not be beholden to them in any way.²⁷ And so they chose Claudius. They did so for several reasons. Firstly and most importantly, he was Germanicus' brother and Germanicus' name was still, even more than twenty years after his death, a talisman in the Roman world.²⁸ The Praetorians were also keenly aware of the value of their support and were hopeful that Claudius would follow the precedent of Gaius²⁹ and offer them a generous donative.³⁰ We should not, moreover, ignore the possibility that the Praetorians, whose continued existence served to counter any senatorial threat to the emperor, found Claudius attractive as a potential princeps both because of the antipathy, indeed contempt, which his aristocratic peers felt towards him,³¹ and also because of his close links with the equites³² - a class to which many of the Praetorians aspired.

This must lead us to consider what role the Praetorians envisaged for Claudius if he became princeps. It has been argued that the Praetorians had no interest in whatever qualities Claudius possessed, but /

but chose him, because of his family connections, as a mere figurehead, possibly to front a Praetorian dictatorship.³³ This view is not supported by Josephus who tells us, quite clearly, that one of the reasons why the Praetorians gave their support to Claudius was because of their respect for him as a man of learning.³⁴ Can we really believe that the Praetorians were so stupid as to entrust their future to a shallow nonentity?³⁵ They had much to lose and nothing to gain by lending their support to a malleable puppet who, as they must surely have realised, would, after the crisis of the accession was over, be exposed to the pressure of individuals and groups who had little cause to love the Praetorians.

The identity of those who took the initiative in promoting Claudius' candidature at this time must remain the subject of speculation. Was the support for him a spontaneous display of loyalty towards the dynasty by the Guard as a whole? Did those tribunes and centurions excluded from Chaerea's circle of conspirators provide the resolution behind this counter-coup? What role did Clemens and his colleague play?³⁶ How did Rufrius Pollio come to be appointed prefect?³⁷ Is it reasonable to suggest that the Praetorians, far from controlling events, were themselves being manipulated by some hidden hand, perhaps even by Claudius himself?³⁸

Whatever influences led the Praetorians to their decision it is clear that, once they had committed themselves to Claudius, they acted forcefully and with determination. They believed, with some reason, that, if their choice became known to those on the Capitol before they could /

could find Claudius, his life would be in danger from a senatorial murder squad. A detachment was despatched to the centre of the city to search for Claudius. In fact, the object of their quest was already in Praetorian hands. He had been found hiding in the palace³⁹ by a private soldier named Gratus.⁴⁰ Despite the assertion by our sources that this was a chance discovery it is possible that Gratus and the rest of Chaerea's cohort were, in fact, looking for Claudius, having concluded, independently of their fellow-soldiers in the camp, that the best interests of the Praetorian Guard would be served by taking Claudius into protective custody.⁴¹

We should not doubt that Claudius was genuinely terrified. He ran the risk of being killed either, as a member of the imperial family, by the conspirators or, as a senator, by vengeful Germans whose treatment of Asprenas he had already witnessed.⁴² He was reassured by Gratus⁴³ and conducted from the palace with some difficulty, due partly to his excitement⁴⁴ and, partly to his physical handicaps,⁴⁵ through a confusion of civilians, who obstructed his progress in the mistaken belief that he was under arrest.⁴⁶ Near the public treasury the two groups of Praetorians, those who had found Claudius and those from the camp, met.⁴⁷ There was a move to proclaim him emperor there and then.⁴⁸ It was, however, judged expedient to proceed with haste to the safety of the Praetorian camp.⁴⁹

The news of Claudius' survival spread quickly through the city. A stunned Senate, whose very willingness to negotiate should have encouraged the Praetorians, sent to the Praetorian camp as envoys two tribunes /

tribunes of the people, Veranius and Brocchus.⁵⁰ These men, who immediately understood the significance of the large number of troops now backing Claudius,⁵¹ forgot about their instructions to demand that Claudius surrender or, if necessary, to hold out before him the prospect of vague future honours⁵² and, after falling on their knees and urging him to avoid civil war, offered him the throne if he was willing to recognise, as a senatorial right, their prerogative of bestowing it on him.⁵³

Claudius, either through excitement or cunning, dissembled and procrastinated - a wise move, for time was undoubtedly on his side, since the Praetorians had an unanimity of purpose which the senatorial side clearly lacked.⁵⁴ He had no desire, nor was it in his interest, to humiliate the senators, but he was determined that they should recognise the reality of the situation and be made aware that he was not prepared to hold the principate as a mere pensioner of the Senate.⁵⁵ Claudius' confidence was further increased by the presence in the Praetorian camp of the Jewish prince, Herod Agrippa, a man whose penchant for duplicity and intrigue had rarely found such a stage on which to perform.⁵⁶

He was sent by Claudius, who had been encouraged by the words of Veranius and Brocchus, to the Senate with two separate messages, the first extremely conciliatory, the second much less so.⁵⁷ After sending the second message, Claudius, who realised that the situation called for action as well as words, addressed the assembled Praetorians, allowed them to hail him as emperor and promised them a donative of 15,000 sesterces each.⁵⁸ Some commentators have tried to justify the size /

size of this donative, for it seems an extremely generous piece of largesse, perhaps even the product of weakness, and does not quite fit the modern view of Claudius as a more decisive leader than our ancient sources have indicated. They have stressed the need to outbid the Senate, who had already offered the Praetorians a reward,⁵⁹ the obligation on Claudius to 'make up for the missing testamentary donative of Gaius',⁶⁰ and the numerous historical precedents.⁶¹ All these arguments are undoubtedly valid and indeed, in the unique circumstances after Gaius' murder, Claudius may have felt that he had enough difficulties without questioning the demands, however excessive and extravagant they might have seemed to him personally, of his principal supporters. In truth, while it may be wrong to call this donative bribery,⁶² it was unquestionably a piece of bad judgement on Claudius' part,⁶³ for he gave to the soldiers 'that fatal sense of their own strength and of the weakness of the civil authority',⁶⁴ which Augustus and Tiberius had worked so hard to diminish. His successors were also, as a result of his liberality compelled to match or exceed the level of his donative and against some of them the charge of buying the loyalty of the troops is less easy to refute.⁶⁵ He also destroyed, by raising the level of donatives to that enjoyed by the troops of Lucullus,⁶⁶ Pompey,⁶⁷ Brutus and Cassius,⁶⁸ the fiscal sanity which Augustus had brought to the financing of the army.⁶⁹ However we should be careful not to overstate the case against Claudius or condemn him too readily, for it remains a fact that, once the Praetorians had received their donative, they remained fiercely loyal to him throughout his principate. Nor did they regard the generosity of this donative as giving them licence to extend their activities into those areas of political /

political decision-making which were the preserve of the emperor.

On the 25th of January those high hopes which the senators had held on the previous day were succeeded by a keen awareness of the reality of the situation. No more than one hundred of them attended a pre-dawn meeting, called by the consuls, in the temple of Jupiter Victor.⁷⁰

They were immediately urged by the soldiers still supporting them to choose one of their own number as an alternative emperor to Claudius.⁷¹

This was to prove a vain exercise, since both the people and the Praetorians were now wholly committed to the continuation of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.⁷² The names of several distinguished senators, some of whom were absent, were considered.⁷³ The eagerness of Marcus Vinicius, Gaius' brother-in-law, to gain the principate was matched by that of the consuls to deny it to him.⁷⁴ Valerius Asiaticus, who could count himself lucky to be alive after his audacious behaviour during the rioting following upon Gaius' murder⁷⁵ and who, despite his known friendship with Gaius,⁷⁶ was alleged to be one of the leaders of the plot,⁷⁷ was also a contender. His candidature was opposed by Lucius Annius Vinicianus who had certainly been closely involved in the conspiracy⁷⁸ and may well have had imperial ambitions.⁷⁹

Yet, even as they argued, the prospect of power was slipping, almost by the hour, ever more inexorably away from them. For into the Praetorian camp were streaming troops of all sorts and of no sorts, some motivated by loyalty of differing kinds, others by expediency and opportunism, from the fleet at Misenum, from the Vigiles' billets and, more ominously, from the gladiatorial schools.⁸⁰ The senators found themselves /

themselves pressured, on the one side, by the urban cohorts, who were desperately demanding an emperor, any emperor, on whom they could bestow the small gift of their support, and, on the other side, by Chaerea and his fellow conspirators, who had not murdered one tyrant to replace him with another, and who knew that the urban cohorts' demands were but the first step in a process which would end, inevitably, in the recognition of Claudius as princeps and, equally inevitably, in their own deaths.⁸¹

Chaerea, reminiscent in his intransigence of some figure from a Greek tragedy, fatally misjudged the mood of the troops and began to harangue them, demanding that they bring him Claudius' head.⁸² Such hectoring was not to the taste of the troops who knew that they were overmatched and perhaps were also reluctant, as they claimed,⁸³ to face their fellow soldiers in battle. They promptly abandoned the senatorial cause and made their way to the Praetorian camp to swear allegiance to Claudius.⁸⁴

The conspirators, now isolated and doomed, turned bitterly upon each other. Sabinus accused Chaerea, who had learned too late the value of compromise, of delivering his country to a slave government.⁸⁵ When there was no more left to say, they did what they had to do and took their own *via dolorosa* to the Praetorian camp. Their treatment there, at the hands of the guardsmen, was predictably rough, for the Praetorians were incensed at the Senate's machinations and were ready to give vent to their innate anti-senatorial prejudices. The consul, Quintus Pomponius, regarded by the Praetorians as particularly culpable, was fortunate to escape with his life.⁸⁶ Another senator, Aponius /

Aponius Saturninus, was actually wounded.⁸⁷ The situation was deteriorating rapidly and could have resulted in a wholesale massacre had not Agrippa, according to Josephus, chosen to play the role of deliverer and urged Claudius to intervene.⁸⁸

Claudius summoned the Senate to the Palatine, to where he was now escorted by a Praetorian detachment under conditions of the strictest security. The crowd, though it was undoubtedly friendly, was brutally pushed back.⁸⁹ Chaerea and Sabinus, now an embarrassment to those who had so recently lauded their every action, were there too, with their hopes or regrets, although Rufrius Pollio, the newly appointed prefect, took considerable care to keep them well away from Claudius.⁹⁰ The result of the vote taken on the fate of Chaerea was strongly for his execution.⁹¹ The senators were eager to please their new emperor and knew in this instance what was required of them. Lupus, the butcher of Caesonia and the infant Drusilla, died with him and the knowledge that he had acted in the public interest was of little comfort to him for, unlike Chaerea, he died badly, or so our historian tells us.⁹² Sabinus, regarding Claudius' unexpected clemency as an unbearable mortification, committed suicide a few days later, and with his death the conspiracy was undeniably ended.⁹³

The loyalty which the Praetorians, for whatever reasons, had shown to him during this 'perilous and awkward interregnum',⁹⁴ impressed itself indelibly on Claudius' memory and, because, perhaps, of the rejections and humiliations which he had suffered previously, he believed such fidelity was worthy of the most conspicuous recognition. He chose to have /

have issued two sets of coins stressing the bonds between the Praetorians and himself, one set bearing the legend IMPER(ATOR) RECEPT(US), the other PRAETOR(IANI) RECEPT(I IN FIDEM)⁹⁵. It is clear that what is reflected by these issues is not merely the debt of Claudius to the Praetorians, but rather the mutuality of the bonds uniting them, 'the comradely spirit between emperor and soldiers and the mutual recognition of each other's power'.⁹⁶ It is unthinkable that even the inexperienced Claudius could have failed to be aware of the necessity of maintaining between the various factions, both within the court and within the larger empire, a balance not only in actual power but also in perceived power as reflected by honours and gifts. Had Claudius really been acknowledging his dependence on the Praetorians in these issues, he would have run the risk of antagonising, quite unnecessarily, both the nobility and the rest of the army. We would do better, therefore, to regard these coins as advertising the 'fides', a virtue particularly important to Claudius,⁹⁷ which existed between the emperor and his Guard.

There were other ways in which Claudius reciprocated the Praetorians' loyalty to him. In AD. 46 he wrote to the Anauni and other tribes attributed to Tridentum in northern Italy granting them the Roman citizenship which they had illegally usurped.⁹⁸ One of his reasons for doing this was because members of the tribe were serving, both as private soldiers and officers in the Praetorian guard. It may well be that he had been influenced by petitions from these men.⁹⁹

Claudius returned to the Praetorian camp every year on the 24th of January, ostensibly to commemorate his accession by a small donative¹⁰⁰ and /

and to provide a gladiatorial show for the Praetorians,¹⁰¹ but perhaps also to relive the exhilaration of these two days, to remember the loyalties of the past and guarantee those of the future.¹⁰² The Praetorian camp was to Claudius much more than the barracks of his bodyguard. It was a place redolent of triumph and success to where he returned at the most glorious moments of his life, to show his infant son, Britannicus, to the troops,¹⁰³ to celebrate his triumph over Caratacus,¹⁰⁴ and, in the following year, to present a donative on the occasion of Nero's assumption of the toga virilis.¹⁰⁵ It was also a place of sanctuary to where he retired at the nadir of his life, in AD. 48, during the crisis of Messalina's marriage to Gaius Silius, to reveal the depths of his despair to the assembled Praetorians.¹⁰⁶

The circumstances of his accession made it inevitable that Claudius should be especially aware of the dangers of assassination and of the need for high-profile security measures to prevent such attempts. We have already seen the almost hysterical reaction of the Praetorians during his journey from the camp to the Palatine on the 25th of January. Once the unique conditions of that period had passed, Claudius tried to allow the Roman people that accessibility which was so vital to his role as princeps.¹⁰⁷ He sat on a tribunal in the Forum, lived, so Dio Cassius alleges, as a private citizen in Neapolis and mingled freely with the people who regarded themselves as his best protectors.¹⁰⁸ But it is clear that under Claudius there continued, despite his best intentions, 'that steady isolation of the emperor and detachment from the collective institutions of Rome'¹⁰⁹ which was partly due to security considerations /

considerations, the almost inevitable concomitant of tyranny.¹¹⁰ He accepted, perhaps even welcomed, for he did not relish physical contact, those security measures which the Praetorians felt were necessary for his protection.¹¹¹ The effectiveness of this tight security is evidenced by the arrest in AD. 47 of Gaius Nonius, an eques, who was caught near the emperor with a concealed sword.¹¹² Despite the fact that he knew that the nobility would find such measures offensive, he instructed his Praetorian security detachments to search both his visitors and the houses of those whom he himself intended to visit.¹¹³ He had guards in attendance at his banquets both in uniform and as waiters.¹¹⁴ Like his predecessors, he requested and was granted permission to bring a personal guard of Praetorian tribunes into the Senate.¹¹⁵ Although he was always careful to show respect for members of the Senate, he was equally careful, bearing in mind the fate of Gaius, to take precautions to limit the opportunities for contact between the Praetorians and them. The officer corps of the Praetorian guard was forbidden to visit the homes of senators.¹¹⁶ His determination to protect himself is reflected in the harsh Homeric watchword - 'revenge on those who struck first' - which he frequently gave to the Praetorian tribunes responsible for his security.¹¹⁷

As well as the preventive security measures outlined above, the Praetorians pursued a more aggressive policy against those whom they considered a threat to the emperor. That they did this with Claudius' blessing and so with a degree of immunity is clear from the chilling manner in which Claudius condones the murder of an ex-consul by a Praetorian centurion on the grounds that it was committed 'ad ultionem imperatoris'.¹¹⁸ /

imperatoris'.¹¹⁸ Praetorian involvement; either direct, as in the killing of Claudius' son-in-law, Gnaeus Pompeius¹¹⁹ or indirect, as in the enforced suicide of Lollia Paulina,¹²⁰ is clear. Nevertheless it would be a gross overstatement to imagine that Rome was subjected during Claudius' principate to a Praetorian-inspired terror.¹²¹ Dissidence was crushed and, where necessary, ruthlessly crushed, but circumspection, which most senators and equites had learned through bitter experience, was usually a guarantee of survival. There were, however, occasions on which political necessity demanded firm Praetorian action. They were heavily involved in the operation which led to the execution, in AD. 47, of Valerius Asiaticus whose prominence and ambitions made him undeniably dangerous. After resigning his consulship early the previous year, he planned, so it was alleged, to visit both his native Gaul and the legions in Germany with revolt in mind.¹²² It is to these charges, rather than to those involving either adultery with Poppaea Sabina or homosexuality,¹²³ that we should look to understand the need for the swiftness and thoroughness of the operation which the Praetorian prefect, Rufrius Crispinus, directed and which led to the arrest of Asiaticus at Baiae.¹²⁴ We may also detect a less competent Praetorian presence at Asiaticus' trial where a soldier who had allegedly been involved in the conspiracy pointed out the wrong bald-headed man when asked to identify Asiaticus.¹²⁵ Despite such hiccups, the aim of the whole operation, the removal of Asiaticus, was successfully achieved and Crispinus was awarded one million sesterces and the insignia of a praetor by the Senate.¹²⁶

Apart from such internal security operations, the normal ceremonial duties /

duties and the provision of guards for members of the imperial family,¹²⁷ Claudius encouraged the Praetorians to participate in the special, prestigious displays which he used to advertise the successes of his reign. On such occasions Claudius loved, understandably in view of his brother's career, to put on a military cloak and play the general.¹²⁸ The Praetorians were present, fully armed, in front of their camp at the celebrations which culminated in the freeing of Caratacus.¹²⁹ One of the prefects, together with some tribunes, gave a demonstration of the skill of the Praetorian cavalry, when they hunted panthers in the Circus Maximus.¹³⁰ Suetonius also tells us of mock battles on the Campus Martius and a representation of Caratacus' surrender in which the Praetorians took part.¹³¹

The most glamorous event of this sort was undoubtedly the celebrations, in AD. 52, at the opening of a tunnel from the Fucine lake through Monte Salviano to the river Liris, aimed at controlling the level of the lake.¹³² Claudius was particularly proud of this achievement, for both Julius Caesar and Augustus, had considered, then abandoned, the idea.¹³³ A naval battle was planned on the lake and, although the size of the event is disputed,¹³⁴ it is clear that a large part of the Praetorian corps, cavalry as well as infantry, was positioned on barricaded rafts to prevent the actual combatants from escaping or threatening the lives of the spectators in the specially-built grandstands.¹³⁵ Although the heavy Praetorian presence guaranteed the safety of those watching, the celebrations, perhaps because of the understandable lack of enthusiasm among the participants, proved less than successful.¹³⁶

It was the need to acquire slaves for this huge project which was allegedly one of the factors which led Claudius to sanction the invasion of Britain in AD. 43.¹³⁷ There were, of course, other more compelling motives, including Claudius' desire to emulate his brother Germanicus and gain military glory.¹³⁸ What is clear is that Aulus Plautius, the Roman commander, after fighting his way across the Medway, halted at the Thames until Claudius himself could arrive. We may suppose that this had been arranged beforehand so that the emperor, by his presence, might encourage the army which was faced with stiffening resistance.¹³⁹ Claudius was accompanied on his slow outward journey through Gaul by one of the prefects, Rufrius Pollio, and several cohorts of Praetorians, as well as a large number of senators.¹⁴⁰ The other prefect, Catonius Justus, remained with the other cohorts in Rome, the control of which was left in the loyal hands of Lucius Vitellius during the six months of Claudius' absence.¹⁴¹ The successful crossing of the Thames was followed by the capture of Camulodunum and, after a stay of only sixteen days, a triumphant return to Rome.¹⁴²

Claudius was generous, as always, to those who had shared the dangers and discomforts of that expedition with him. The Praetorians received their share of the honours. The prefect, Rufrius Pollio, was granted a bust and, when he accompanied Claudius, a seat in the Senate, although we should note that Claudius was careful to quote an Augustan precedent for his action.¹⁴³ Nor were the less senior soldiers ignored by their emperor at this time. Marcus Vettius Valens, who served in the 8th Praetorian cohort, won a gold crown, as well as the more common torcs, arm-bands /

arm-bands and discs, and, by doing so, enhanced his future career prospects.¹⁴⁴

Catonius Justus was less fortunate, for he was executed, allegedly because of his intention of reporting to the emperor Messalina's many infidelities during the six months of Claudius' absence.¹⁴⁵

Rufrius Pollio's aggrandizement was of no great duration, since he too was executed.¹⁴⁶ They were replaced by Rufrius Crispinus and Lusius Geta who, although they were by no means creatures of Messalina, understood from the fate of their predecessors with what circumspection the empress's extra-marital activities should be treated.¹⁴⁷

It was Messalina who in AD. 48 provoked the greatest crisis of Claudius' principate. She took part in a marriage ceremony with Gaius Silius, the consul-designate, while the emperor was in Ostia sacrificing for the safety of the corn fleet.¹⁴⁸ The motivation for this union has never been adequately explained. Messalina's promiscuity, Silius' ambitions, even the performance of a Bacchic rite have been adduced as reasons.¹⁴⁹ But none by itself convinces.¹⁵⁰ The questions, however, to which we must address ourselves are whether the marriage was part of an attempted coup and what role the Praetorians played in the whole affair.

It is clear that the marriage was an element in a wider conspiracy. Messalina and Silius could hardly have hoped to survive without taking action against Claudius. Their marriage was a public declaration to the Senate and people of their judgement that the emperor was too incompetent to rule. Claudius' tenure of the principate was in immediate /

immediate danger. The threat would soon have extended to his very life. We can detect the outline of the conspirators' plan; firstly the marriage, next the murder of Claudius, and finally the adoption of Britannicus by Silius. The military muscle for the coup was perhaps to have come from the Vigiles and the gladiatorial school.¹⁵¹ Our sources mention no active Praetorian involvement in the conspiracy. It seems probable, however, that the Praetorian prefects were aware, to some extent, of what was happening, but preferred to continue to exercise with regard to Messalina's activities that discretion which had served them so well in the past. The failure of Lusius Geta, one of these prefects, to report the treasonable activities which were now taking place in Rome was matched by his failure, when interviewed, to convince the emperor of his reliability and competence to suppress the conspiracy. Since his main responsibility was undoubtedly the protection of the emperor's person and since his inexcusable, if understandable, dereliction of duty had now put the emperor's life at risk, he was, not surprisingly, removed from his command which was entrusted temporarily, for one day only, to Narcissus, who was both loyal to his emperor and motivated, by personal hatred of Messalina and Silius, towards vigorous action.¹⁵²

A detachment of Praetorians was despatched to bring to an end the wedding celebrations which had degenerated into a bacchanalian revel.¹⁵³ By the time Claudius returned to Rome, the conspiracy was over. Narcissus skilfully guided the emperor to the safe harbour of the Praetorian camp, where Claudius, who had fallen into that state of torpor associated with delayed shock, was able to utter only a few incoherent /

incoherent words asking his soldiers to kill him if he ever thought of marriage again.¹⁵⁴ Despite the emperor's hesitancy, the Praetorians loudly proclaimed their loyalty and demanded the punishment of the guilty. Silius and 9 others were executed. But Narcissus had to press Claudius to obtain sanction for the execution of Mnester who had been Messalina's lover and a member of her inner circle for many years.¹⁵⁶ Such vacillation boded ill for the freedmen who were aware, as was Messalina, that the longer her execution was delayed the greater were her chances of survival and rehabilitation.¹⁵⁷ When Claudius announced that he would see 'the poor woman' on the next day, Narcissus decided that he could wait no longer and ordered the tribune and centurions on duty to proceed to the gardens of Lucullus and execute the empress.¹⁵⁸ Although he had Claudius' warrant appointing him to command of the Guard, and although the Praetorians' loyalty to Claudius was beyond dispute, Narcissus was anxious enough to take two extra precautions. He told the officers that the orders had come directly from the emperor. He also sent ahead another freedman, Euodus, as 'custos et exactor mortis', a sort of political commissar, to ensure that the execution was properly carried out. He need not have worried. The ruthless and silent professionalism with which the Praetorian officers completed their mission provides a strong contrast with the boorish scurrility of the freedman. The tribune, unable to suffer Messalina's dithering and her feeble attempts at suicide, finished her off with a single blow.¹⁵⁹

Claudius was perhaps grateful for the initiative shown by Narcissus who was voted the insignia of the quaestorship by the senate.¹⁶⁰

The /

The inadequacies of Lusus Geta were judged charitably and, indeed, his survival of the purge immediately following the suppression of the conspiracy and his subsequent tenure of the prefecture of Egypt would suggest that his sins, however culpable, were those of omission rather than commission.¹⁶¹ The coup itself must be judged a most miserable fiasco. One important reason for this was, of course, the apparent failure of the conspirators to solicit Praetorian support. It was only the involvement of the Guard which could have guaranteed that degree of pitilessness necessary for success. Moreover, none of the plotters appears to have understood the principal lesson of the events surrounding Claudius' accession - that control of the Praetorian camp was vital for the successful outcome of any attempt to seize power.

Claudius forgot what he had said to the Praetorians in his humiliation and remarried the following year.¹⁶² His new bride was his niece Agrippina. She determined to win the support of as many Praetorian officers as possible for her main aim, the promotion of her own son, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus,¹⁶³ over Claudius' son, Britannicus.¹⁶⁴ There were many willing to listen to her, especially those who had been involved in the execution of Messalina and recognised only too well what the consequences of that action would be for them if her son Britannicus gained the principate.¹⁶⁵ Others will have understood the significance of the betrothal, in AD. 49, of Lucius Domitius to his cousin Octavia,¹⁶⁶ and of the adoption by Claudius of Lucius Domitius on the 25th of February of the following year, when he became, by law of the Roman people, Tiberius Claudius Nero Caesar.¹⁶⁷ In AD. 51, at the celebrations associated with his assumption of the toga virilis /

virilis, Nero led the Praetorian cavalry in parade. The contrast between the magnificently-attired Nero and Britannicus, in his boy's toga, can have left those Praetorians still wavering in no doubt as to which of them was the heir to the principate.¹⁶⁸

Agrippina, however, believing that anything less than total domination was weakness, determined to remove from the Guard those tribunes and centurions who were still unresponsive to her overtures and whom she suspected of residual loyalty to Britannicus.¹⁶⁹

She argued that factionalism was dangerously rife in the Guard, though she was, no doubt, careful to omit that much of it was due to her machinations.¹⁷⁰

Claudius, now weary of ruling, yet anxious, as ever, in matters pertaining to his personal security, accepted her arguments that Lusius Geta and Rufrius Crispinus were no longer suitable commanders and cannot have failed to admire her suggested means of removing them.¹⁷¹

They were promoted and honoured, and, if they had less direct influence within the imperial court, Lusius Geta was, no doubt, consoled by his prefecture of Egypt, while Rufrius Crispinus gained consular insignia and the opportunity to spend more time with his beautiful young wife.¹⁷²

Claudius, who might have cited the careers of Seianus and Macro as examples of the dangers inherent in appointing a single prefect, nevertheless agreed with Agrippina's suggestion that discipline would be stricter if the Praetorians were under the direction of one man of proven reliability. And, of course, Agrippina knew of just such a man. So, in AD. 51, Sextus Afranius Burrus became sole prefect of the Praetorian guard.¹⁷³

He was a Narbonensian from Vasio who had been a military tribune and a procurator of the private property of Livia /

Livia, Tiberius and Claudius.¹⁷⁴ He was aware, though not obsequiously so, to whom he owed his appointment and for what purpose he had been given the prefecture.¹⁷⁵

Claudius died on the 13th of October AD. 54.¹⁷⁶ Agrippina's involvement is, not unexpectedly, suggested by our sources, although it is by no means accepted by all modern commentators.¹⁷⁷ The omens of his death, at least two of which are reported to have occurred in the Praetorian camp, had been many and varied.¹⁷⁸ So, although there was grief, there was little surprise at the news of his death. The delay at announcing the news and the increased level of security were common measures at such times and less sinister than Tacitus suggests.¹⁷⁹

At midday Nero emerged from the palace accompanied by Burrus at whose instigation the cohort on duty raised a cheer. The fact that some of the soldiers enquired about the whereabouts of Britannicus suggests that Agrippina's purge had been less than complete and that under Burrus the reins of control were not held unnecessarily tightly.¹⁸⁰ But Britannicus was nowhere to be seen¹⁸¹ and the Praetorians were ever realists. Nero was carried in a litter to the camp to be hailed as emperor.¹⁸²

As the triumphant cries of the Praetorians rang in his ears, Nero must surely, at that moment, have known beyond doubt that the principate was his, for, although the approval of the Senate was gratifying and the blessing of the people gladdening, it was unquestionably /

unquestionably the Praetorians with their swords who pointed the path which the others had to follow. And it may well have occurred to the cheering Praetorians that the prerogative which they had seized, through necessity, almost fourteen years before at the time of Claudius' accession had, by Nero's display of deference in visiting the camp, become institutionalised. Praetorian endorsement appeared to be, for a new princeps, not a desirable luxury but an unavoidable constraint.

CHAPTER V .

THE PRAETORIAN GUARD OF NERO

The cheers with which the Praetorians greeted Nero's accession¹ were, although conventional on such occasions, nevertheless sincere and heart-felt, for the new emperor was the grandson of Germanicus who, in the hagiology of the Praetorians, occupied a most honoured position.² However their commitment to Nero, although, at this stage, beyond doubt, was not granted unconditionally. The Praetorians were hopeful, especially after the donative which Nero had given them,³ that the mutuality of the bonds between the emperor and the Guard which had characterised the reign of Claudius would continue and perhaps even increase. But in this Nero was to disappoint them. Although he presented them with an occasional donative, granted them a free monthly grain allowance and publicised their services to him on his coinage after AD. 64,⁴ there was clearly, as the reign progressed, a growing estrangement between Nero and a number of Praetorian tribunes and centurions.⁵ In the end the entire Guard deserted him. In AD. 54, however, the new emperor enjoyed widespread support among the Praetorians. There may have been some dissidence - Britannicus was not without his supporters - but it was of a passive nature.

Much of the credit for the smoothness with which the change of emperor occurred was due to the skills of Sextus Afranius Burrus, the Praetorian prefect. Indeed his contribution at this time may have been recognised by the award of consular insignia.⁶ Before the year was out, however, Burrus, together with Seneca, with whom he worked closely,⁷ had to face up to the problems caused by Agrippina who /

who was determined to maintain the power which she had enjoyed in the last years of Claudius' principate.⁸ This impending trial of strength may well have caused the prefect certain misgivings. He was on the horns of a dilemma as to which of the two - mother or son - was more deserving of his loyalty. Although his appointment to the prefecture was, to a large degree, Agrippina's gift, his continuing tenure of that post was dependent on Nero's favour. His resolution of this predicament provides us with an insight not only into the role of the Praetorian prefect within the imperial court but also into the manner in which the Praetorians, both individually and collectively, were used by the emperor to reflect the vagaries of his favour.

At first Nero chose to advertise conspicuously his affection for his mother - through the Guard among other ways. To the tribune of the watch he gave the password 'optima matrum'.⁹ Agrippina's Praetorian bodyguard was supplemented by a detachment of Germans.¹⁰ Yet behind this facade of loving respect a growing split was developing between the emperor, who was determined to limit his mother's power and destroy that of Pallas, her most prominent protégé,¹¹ and Agrippina, whose reckless aggressiveness was politically embarrassing and increasingly offensive to Burrus and Seneca.¹² The prefect, quick to realise where his own interest lay, did not intervene to save Pallas when he was dismissed from his position as financial secretary early in AD. 55.¹³ Agrippina felt that Burrus, by omitting to act in what she perceived to be her interest, had betrayed her and she reacted accordingly.¹⁴ Her temper, never easily controlled, erupted in a flood of venomous insults against Seneca and Burrus whose withered /

withered hand she mocked.¹⁵ She was unable, however, to affect the prefect's standing with Nero which had perhaps been enhanced by the advice which he had given leading to the appointment of Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo in Armenia.¹⁶ In her frustration Agrippina threatened to take Britannicus to the Praetorian camp and speak, as the daughter of Germanicus, to the cohorts there.¹⁷ In saying this, she probably hoped to demonstrate the extent of her power to Nero and so intimate^{id} him into doing as she wished.¹⁸ Nero however took the threat seriously with fatal consequences for the unfortunate Britannicus.¹⁹

The alarmed emperor approached Julius Pollio, the tribune of the 4th Praetorian cohort, who had in his custody the infamous poisoner Locusta. After an unsuccessful first attempt at poisoning Britannicus, both tribune and murderess were stimulated by Nero's angry threats to produce a more effective poison.²⁰ This was given to the young prince in water which was added to a hot drink which his taster had already tested. The official cause of his death was given as an epileptic fit, but poisoning was widely suspected.²¹ It seems unlikely that Burrus had foreknowledge of the murder plan or of his subordinate's participation. Indeed, Pollio may have become involved only because Locusta was in his custody, but this, of course, raises the question of why he, a Praetorian tribune, was given the responsibility of overseeing the detention of a condemned prisoner - hardly a normal duty.

Agrippina, who was present at the meal, was, according to Tacitus, panic-stricken by Britannicus' death, perhaps conscious of her own culpability /

culpability in the affair.²² Her self-confidence was not, however, undermined by this setback. She paid attention to Octavia,²³ Nero's estranged wife, and Rubellius Plautus²⁴ who was, like Nero, the great-great-grandson of Augustus. She began to collect funds²⁵ - an essential prerequisite of any coup attempt²⁶ - and, most ominously of all from Nero's point of view, she received visits from tribunes and centurions of the Guard.²⁷ The emperor's suspicions of Burrus resurfaced. Was he still the loyal client of Agrippina? Perhaps her harsh insults of his physical handicap were only the product of a momentary frustration in a woman used to getting her own way in everything. Or, even worse, perhaps they were a ploy designed to lull him into a false sense of security. Of Burrus' feelings the emperor could not be certain; of his mother's he had no doubt. Her bodyguards were immediately withdrawn in case they were seduced by her claims to revolution and also to give to the public a clear sign of his displeasure with her.²⁸ She was moved from the palace to the house of Antonia, her grandmother, where Nero visited her only in the company of trusted Praetorian centurions.²⁹

His suspicions of Burrus came to a head when the actor Paris, acting on behalf of Junia Silana and Domitia,³⁰ both personal enemies of Agrippina,³¹ interrupted a nocturnal feast, at which Nero, Burrus and Seneca were all present, to accuse Agrippina of encouraging Rubellius Plautus to revolution.³² The emperor's first reaction, influenced, no doubt, by his intake of wine, was to have Agrippina executed and to remove Burrus, whose failure to detect the plot he regarded as proof of disloyalty, from the command of the Guard.³³ According to the historian /

historian Fabius Rusticus, Nero actually drafted a letter appointing Gaius Caecina Tuscus, son of Nero's foster-mother, and, at this time, judicial adviser to the prefect of Egypt, to the command of the Praetorian cohorts.³⁴ Burrus, however, who was rather more than the simple, upright soldier portrayed by Tacitus, handled an extremely difficult situation with considerable aplomb, for he not only saved himself by saying what he knew that Nero wanted to hear in the drunken, heated atmosphere of that night - namely that Agrippina would die if she was guilty - but he also, by ensuring that she was given an opportunity to answer the charges and that he was put in charge of questioning her, was able to save Agrippina.³⁵

In the cold light of the following dawn Nero's anxieties over Burrus' loyalty returned and he decided to send several imperial freedmen along with Burrus and Seneca to ensure that the interrogation was conducted properly and thoroughly.³⁶ Burrus, however, had too much experience of court politics to be caught so easily. After informing Agrippina of the charges against her and giving her the names of her accusers, he asked her with a threatening expression, simulated perhaps for the benefit of the imperial freedmen, for her comments which were characteristically aggressive and compelling.³⁷ The case against her fell apart and her accusers, with the exception of Paris, an imperial favourite, were punished. Furthermore Nero felt compelled to allow her to nominate four of her supporters, including Faenius Rufus, a future commander of the Praetorian Guard, to important political posts.³⁸

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FIG. 1 - Relief showing Praetorian guardsmen. The figure in the centre with the gorgon's head on his breastplate was probably an officer.

A



B



FIG. 2 - Two coins issued by Mark Antony , one (a) honouring the Praetorian cohorts , the other (b) his cohors speculatorum , a special duties battalion.



FIG. 3 - Praetorian guardsmen in civilian dress : from a frieze of circa A.D. 83-5 found under the Palazzo della Cancelleria , Rome.

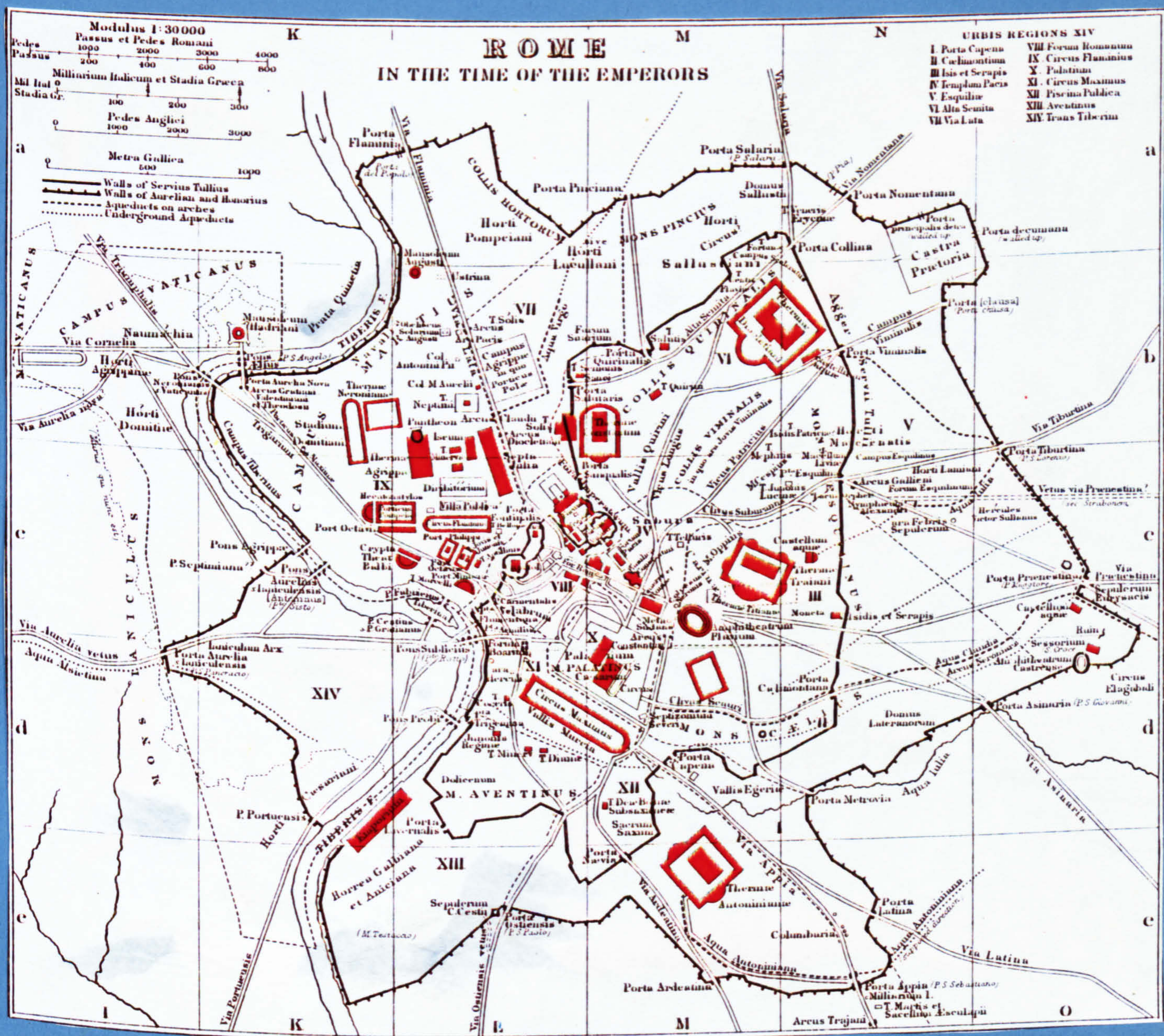


FIG. 4 - Map of Imperial Rome, showing the location of the castra praetoria. The defensive wall into which it was incorporated was not built until the late third century under the Emperor Aurelian.



FIG. 5 - Gaius addresses the assembled Praetorians .



FIG. 6 - Claudius emphasises the bonds between the Praetorians and himself : (a) depicts the shrine within the castra praetoria ; the image of Fides is seated opposite a military standard: (b) shows Claudius clasping hands with a Praetorian holding an eagle standard.





(a)

FIG. 7 - Nero courts Praetorian support. (a) may show Nero with the Praetorian cavalry : (b) is of a more traditional type with Nero , accompanied by a Praetorian prefect , addressing the Guard.



(b)

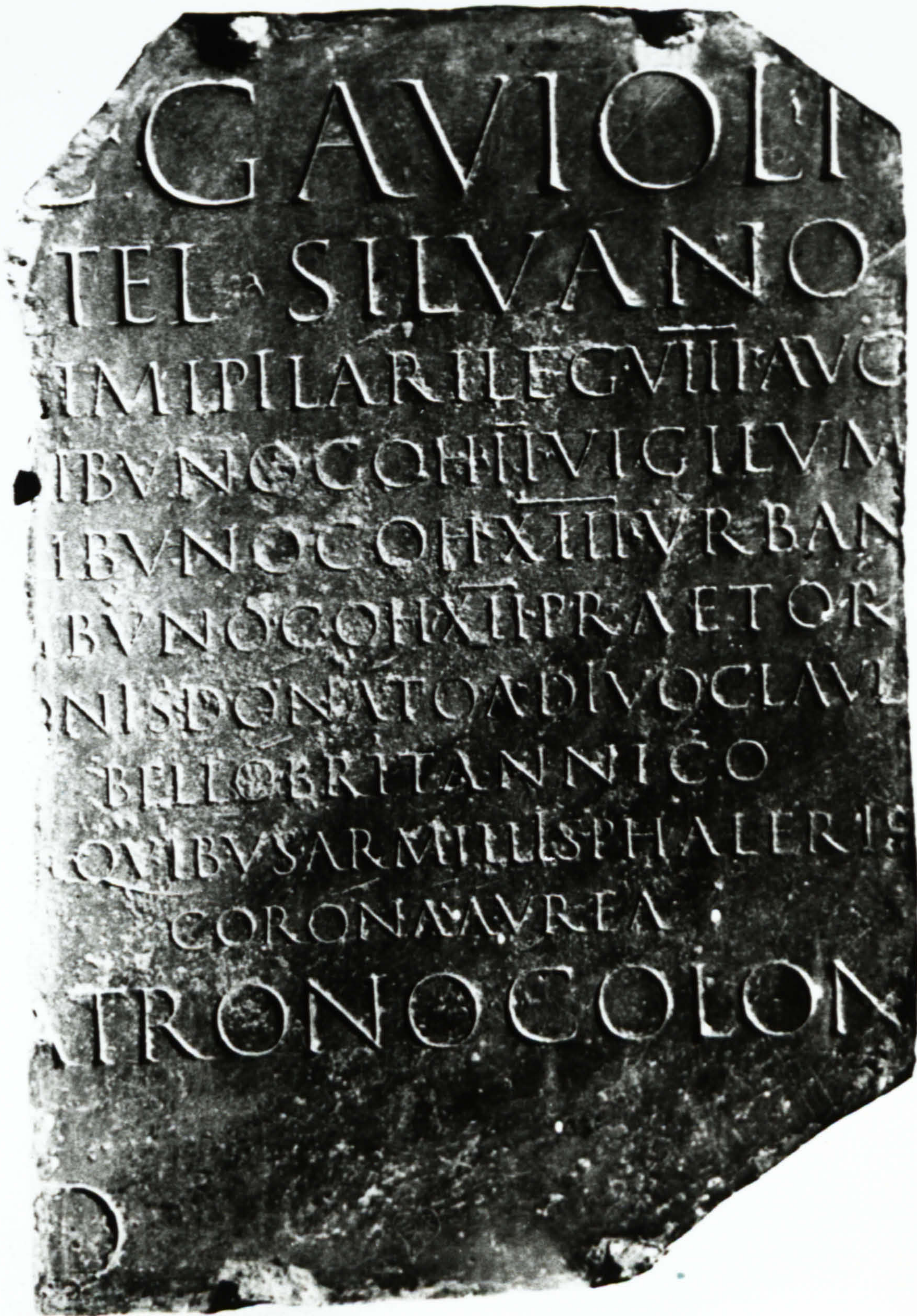


FIG. 8 - An inscription honouring Gavius Silvanus who , as
tribune of the 12th Praetorian cohort , became involved in the
Pisonian conspiracy of A.D. 65.



FIG. 9 - An attempt by the Vitellians to subvert the loyalty of Otho's Praetorians by promoting the mutual bonds , the FIDES of the legend , of the Rhine legions and the Praetorian Guard.

If we examine the motives behind Burrus' actions on this occasion, it is obvious that they were partly due to the personal ties between himself and Agrippina, to whom he clearly retained much more than a vestigial loyalty.³⁹ There is, however, another, less altruistic explanation of Burrus' behaviour. The maintenance of his own and Seneca's position in Nero's court depended, in part, on Agrippina's survival. As Griffin points out 'Nero would only heed them while he saw them as a refuge from his mother. Once he was gone, the full scope of his power would become clear to him, nor would he ever lack people to remind him of it.'⁴⁰ Burrus may have believed that it was a necessary condition of his own tenure of power to play off Nero's fears against Agrippina's intrigues.

Such a policy inevitably left Burrus himself vulnerable to charges of supporting Agrippina. That woman's enemies, noting the apparent impregnability of her own position after the fiasco of the previous attempt to accuse her of planning revolution, decided instead to attack her indirectly by accusing Burrus, together with Pallas, of plotting to put on the imperial throne Faustus Cornelius Sulla who had been consul in AD. 52, was married to Antonia, Claudius's daughter, and as such, was much distrusted by Nero.⁴¹ It has been suggested that the main target of this accusation was Pallas, that a charge of treason was used to circumvent the emperor's prohibition of malfeasance suits against the former financial secretary and that 'Burrus was involved in connection with his past career in the management of imperial property'.⁴² Is it not, however, more probable that the accusation was related to the funds allegedly collected by Agrippina prior to Paris' delation? In any event, at the /

the trial, which was conducted before Nero and his consilium rather than in the senate, Burrus was allegedly allowed to sit as an assessor and the charge was easily refuted.⁴³

Following these incidents Nero and Agrippina appear to have reached a *modus vivendi* of sorts. Their relationship did not apparently deteriorate further over the next few years. We may perhaps detect Burrus' hand here. By AD. 58, however, Nero had fallen under the baleful influence of Poppaea Sabina, who dared him to break free of his mother's authority.⁴⁴ The emperor, in frustration, considered matricide the only means of resolving a situation which had now become intolerable for him.⁴⁵

It must remain a matter of conjecture whether Burrus knew of the murder plot before he was summoned along with Seneca to Nero's villa at Baiae in the aftermath of Anicetus' farcical attempt to drown Agrippina in the Bay of Naples and her subsequent escape.⁴⁶ Tacitus himself delivers no judgement on this matter: *incertum experiens an et ante gnaros*.⁴⁷ It is also unclear whether Burrus and Seneca were with the emperor at Baiae or were summoned from Rome.⁴⁸ The problem which they had to address was that Anicetus' failure had excluded the possibility of another 'accident' to Agrippina. Matricide and the concomitant opprobrium could not be avoided. What was to be decided was not whether Agrippina should die, but rather the manner of her death, the agents of that murder, and how it might best be represented as justifiable. By his involvement in these decisions Burrus stands revealed as rather more than an accessory before the fact.⁴⁹

It has traditionally been assumed that Nero sent for Burrus to ask if the Praetorians would kill Agrippina and that Burrus refused to sanction Praetorian involvement, citing as justification the devotion of the Guard to the entire imperial house, especially the family of Germanicus.⁵⁰ But there are certain difficulties in this

interpretation. Firstly, it is by no means clear that any of the Praetorian cohorts were with Nero in the area of Baiae at this time.⁵¹

Secondly, if Nero had really wanted Praetorian participation in the murder, he could surely have found another ruthless and ambitious tribune like Julius Pollio without asking Burrus. Finally we should note that in Tacitus' account it is Seneca not Nero who asks Burrus whether the Praetorians should become involved in the affair.⁵²

Perhaps we should ask exactly what Nero required of his Guard at this time. I suggest that what Nero wanted to ask Burrus was how the Praetorians would react to the murder of Agrippina and whether they would remain loyal to him.⁵³ Yet he could not bring himself to ask

this, for he knew that between an emperor and his Guard there must always exist the appearance, however illusory and spurious, of total loyalty. Where once the slightest hint of doubt is allowed to intrude into that close relationship, the thought is quickly overtaken by the deed and all is lost. It was Seneca who, realising the young emperor's predicament, then turned to Burrus and asked whether the Praetorians would kill Agrippina.⁵⁴ If we accept that he may have

been speaking elliptically, then the possibility exists that, by saying what he did, he may well have been answering the question which Nero was afraid to ask and indicating that there was no question of Praetorian action against Nero. We should also note the ambiguity of /

of Burrus' reply in which he assured Nero of the Praetorians' neutrality. Although at one level he was clearly replying to Seneca's question and stating that the Praetorians would not become involved in the murder of Agrippina, at another level he was giving Nero licence to use his own murder squad from the fleet at Misenum without fear of Praetorian intervention on Agrippina's behalf.⁵⁵

If we accept this interpretation of Burrus' behaviour on that night, does he become any less 'despicable'?⁵⁶ Are he and Seneca any less 'accomplices'⁵⁷ in the plan to murder Agrippina? We would, however, perhaps do better to regard them as realists, for the truth is, as they both understood, that Agrippina was doomed from the moment Nero decided to kill her. There could be, despite Agrippina's alleged hopes, no reconciliation between Nero and his mother. The deed, once begun, had to be brought to a conclusion. Burrus and Seneca were 'making the best of a bad situation which they had no opportunity to prevent.'⁵⁸ Once the murder had been committed, Burrus urged the tribunes and centurions of the Guard to attend Nero and offer him effusive congratulations on his 'escape' from the attempt of Agerinus, Agrippina's freedman, to murder him. Burrus was eager both to encourage the emperor to regard the Praetorians favourably and also to remind him by whose sanction the murder had been committed.

We should not allow Tacitus' fascination with the intrigues of the imperial court to divert us from the fact that during this period the Praetorians continued to perform conscientiously their more mundane duties. In AD. 54 Nero abandoned the practice of having a Praetorian /

Praetorian cohort police the theatre. According to Tacitus, the action was primarily motivated by Nero's libertarian desire to give the people of Rome a greater degree of freedom, although it may also have been because he was afraid of exposing the soldiers to corrupting influences.⁶⁰ It was a brave, though ultimately unsuccessful, experiment since the following year after serious disturbances the Praetorians were ordered back into the theatre.⁶¹ Suetonius mentions the involvement of tribunes, presumably Praetorian tribunes, in the bodyguard which Nero thought it wise to take with him on his nocturnal roamings through the less reputable areas of Rome after he had been beaten up by Julius Montanus. It seems more probable, however, that this bodyguard consisted of detachments from the German Guard as well as gladiators.⁶² The Praetorians also became involved in at least one policing action outside Rome. In AD. 58 a Praetorian cohort accompanied two senatorial brothers, Scribonius Rufus and Scribonius Proculus, to Puteoli on the bay of Naples to suppress small-scale popular violence against members of the town senate. A few of the ring-leaders of the trouble were put to death by the Praetorians and order was restored.⁶³ This must, however, have been an unusual assignment. We hear of no similar policy after the riot at the amphitheatre in Pompeii.⁶⁴ Indeed, in the incident in Puteoli we should note that a commissioner was sent first and that the Praetorians were despatched only after he asked for them.

After Agrippina's death the Praetorians found themselves involved in Nero's attempts to promote himself as an artist.⁶⁵ Burrus ordered one /

one of the Praetorian cohorts to attend the Iuvenalia in AD. 59 at which Nero, accompanying himself on the lyre, sang poems of his own composition.⁶⁶ Groups of soldiers, possibly Praetorians, were also present at Nero's first public performance in AD. 64 in Naples.⁶⁷ In the summer of the following year Nero decided, despite a senatorial attempt to forestall this by offering him the crowns for singing and oratory, to appear at the second Neroneia.⁶⁸ This time the Praetorians played a more active part in the proceedings with Tigellinus and Nymphidius Sabinus, the then Praetorian prefects, carrying the emperor's lyre,⁶⁹ while a detachment of Praetorians intimidated the audience and compelled them to applaud.⁷⁰

We should not underestimate the disgust which was provoked especially among the officer corps not only by the spectacle of the emperor himself appearing on stage, but also by the atmosphere of effeteness and theatricality which surrounded his appearance. The Praetorians themselves were always liable to be stigmatised, albeit unjustly, as parade-ground soldiers by the legions on the frontiers,⁷¹ but one can easily appreciate the antipathy and repugnance which they, as soldiers, felt for the Augustiani, Nero's fan club, with their pomaded hair and elaborate clapping rhythms.⁷² Even at the Iuvenalia Burrus had found it difficult to conceal his distaste.⁷³ It may well have been Nero's first public appearance in Naples which appalled the Praetorian tribune, Subrius Flavus, so much that he wanted, in the interests of symbolism, to kill Nero while he was singing on the stage.⁷⁴ It was certainly one of the reasons which led that tribune to participate in the Pisonian conspiracy of AD. 65.⁷⁵ Three years later another tribune Antonius Honoratus, speaking to the assembled Praetorians at the /

the time of Nymphidius Sabinus' attempted usurpation of the imperial throne, mentioned the sense of shame that the Praetorians felt at Nero's public performances as a musician and a tragic actor.⁷⁶

By the time he returned from Greece in AD. 68 a clear rift had developed in Nero's relationship with the Guard. As he entered Rome in triumph, it was the Augustiani rather than the Praetorians who accompanied his chariot.⁷⁷ It was, as Griffin writes, 'the triumph of an artist'.⁷⁸ It was also, however, a triumph dearly bought for in achieving it he had seriously offended the Praetorians. That was an insult which they were to remember.

It is widely held that the influence of Burrus declined in the years between the murder of Agrippina and his own death in AD. 62.⁹⁹

Certainly the perception of an estrangement between emperor and prefect was strong enough to allow some credence to be given to the allegation that Nero poisoned him.⁸⁰ It seems probable, however, that the cause of Burrus' death was cancer, possibly of the larynx.⁸¹ The

difficulty in speaking caused by such an illness could also explain the brevity of Burrus' reply when Nero visited him on his death-bed.

There is no need to regard Burrus' last words as 'a reproachful contrast with the emperor's diseased soul'.⁸² Burrus remained despite

Tigellinus' later aspersions, the loyal servant of Nero until his death.⁸³ The view of Gillis that 'in a showdown between Nero and Burrus...

Burrus' men would have supported him',⁸⁴ does not seem to me at all

convincing. The fate of Seianus and Macro, not to mention Rufrius

Pollio and Catonius Justus, provided an explicit education to any

Praetorian prefect on the danger of believing that his power rested

on anything other than the imperial benediction. Secondly, while

Burrus' /

Burrus' survival and promotion in an imperial court notorious for its intrigues suggest that he possessed a greater awareness of the political realities of his time than our sources have allowed,⁸⁵ there is nothing in any of these sources to indicate that he ever contemplated using the Praetorian cohorts against Nero. He was, as Seneca claimed a 'vir egregius et tibi principi natus'.⁸⁶

After Burrus' death, Nero, ignoring the argument for a single prefect which his mother had put forward in AD. 51, appointed two men, Ofonius Tigellinus, a former commander of the Vigiles, and Faenius Rufus, formerly in charge of the corn supply, to be joint commanders of the Praetorian cohorts.⁸⁷ It may well have been that Nero felt that the power which tenure of the Praetorian prefecture conferred was too great to be granted to a single man. On the other hand, Nero may have appointed these two men in an attempt to create a balance in the influence of the different factions within his court. It is also possible, but there is no evidence to support this, that, although they were joint prefects, Tigellinus and Faenius Rufus had as prefects separate functions, the one liaising with the imperial court, while the other organised the cohorts in the Viminal camp.

From almost all our sources the picture which we have of Tigellinus is of a man irretrievably evil. In AD. 62 he played upon Nero's growing paranoia to bring about the deaths of Cornelius Sulla Felix and Rubellius Plautus.⁸⁸ Four years later he brought about the deaths of Gaius Petronius, of whose influence with Nero he was jealous,⁸⁹ and a senator, Minucius Thermus, one of whose freedmen had /

had made the fatal mistake of bringing damaging charges against him.⁹⁰ He was a torturer of women, of Pythias, Octavia's maid in AD. 62⁹¹ and possibly also of Epicharis in AD. 65 during the Pisonian plot.⁹² He denigrated his colleague Rufus to such an extent that he was driven in desperation into the conspiracy of AD. 65.⁹³ After the same conspiracy he accepted bribes to let some of the accused go free.⁹⁴ He is alleged to have allowed one of his properties on the Aemilian hill to have been set on fire deliberately during the catastrophe in Rome in AD. 64,⁹⁵ and he may have organised the fearful deaths of the Christian scapegoats in the aftermath of that fire.⁹⁶ He acted as a panderer to Nero's increasingly degenerate sexual tastes, organising the orgy at the Pool of Agrippa in AD. 64⁹⁷ and giving away Sporus during Nero's 'marriage' to his catamite in Greece in AD. 67.⁹⁸ He allowed the wills of condemned men to be verified only if, like Annaeus Mela in AD. 66, they made a substantial bequest to him.⁹⁹ He extorted one million sesterces from Larcius, a Lydian, in AD. 68 in return for allowing him his life.¹⁰⁰ We may rightly see his hand in the action against Thrasea Paetus in AD. 66, for the prosecutor, Cossutianus Capito, was his son-in-law, and, indeed, it was through Tigellinus' influence that in AD. 62 that rogue had been brought back from exile and restored to his senatorial rank.¹⁰¹ According to Plutarch, after Nero's death in AD. 68 Tigellinus was the most hated man in Rome and his exemption from punishment was widely considered scandalous and discreditable to the new regime.¹⁰² None of our sources attempt to exculpate Tigellinus. Even Dio Cassius' view of him as a mere appendage of Nero during the Greek tour in AD. 67 is not an attempt to exonerate the prefect, but rather intended to suggest that, as he constantly accompanied Nero, his crimes were not separable /

separable from the emperor's, as were those of Polyclitus at Rome and Calvia Crispinilla in Greece.¹⁰³

Some modern commentators have accepted this picture unchallengingly.¹⁰⁴

Others, however, have tried, if not to rehabilitate Tigellinus, to present a more balanced view of him, by emphasising the restrictions on his power and the prejudicial characterisation of him by Tacitus and by questioning the innocence of at least some of his victims.

It is certainly true that, like all Praetorian prefects, Tigellinus' power was dependent on the emperor's grace and favour.¹⁰⁵ And

whether or not Tigellinus was a mere 'factotum',¹⁰⁶ it is clear that because of his lower social standing he had less room for manoeuvre in his relationship with Nero than Burrus had.¹⁰⁷ His participation

in Nero's entertainments may well have been voluntary, for he led a highly active sex-life,¹⁰⁸ but it was also a means to ensure the emperor's continuing favour.¹⁰⁹ Although our evidence for any

political programme initiated by Burrus and Seneca is limited and has been the subject of much debate, it is reasonable to assume that their ability to manipulate Nero in such matters was greater than that of Tigellinus.¹¹⁰ Besides it is quite certain that Nero listened to

other advisers, 'superior in public station and some superior in talent'.¹¹¹ So we may reasonably accept the representation of the Praetorian prefect, presumably Tigellinus, in the Octavia, where his role is that of a subordinate carrying out rather than initiating or provoking the emperor's orders.¹¹²

It is also evident that in their characterisation of Tigellinus our sources /

sources have, for differing reasons, chosen to exaggerate his role and influence in Nero's court. Tacitus has a distinct tendency to allow his perception of someone's role to influence his characterisation of that person. His love of antitheses, of good versus bad, also affects the way in which he represents people.¹¹³ Both of these factors undoubtedly have a bearing on his portrayal of Tigellinus who, in the Annals, plays 'an evil role as a second Seianus'¹¹⁴ and 'is the open, disgraceful and dramatic supplanter of Seneca'.¹¹⁵ To achieve this effect, Tacitus underplays the role of Seneca in unsavoury incidents like the murder of Britannicus,¹¹⁶ and at the same time magnifies Tigellinus' involvement in the deaths of Rubellius Plautus and Cornelius Sulla Felix.¹¹⁷ The assumed innocence of Sulla and Plautus has been rightly questioned.¹¹⁸ We should note that Nero refrained from executing Sulla in AD. 55 and again in AD. 59, being content on the second occasion with sending him to comfortable exile in Massilia.¹¹⁹ Again, in the case of Plautus, Nero avoided putting him to death in AD. 55 when Agrippina was accused of planning his elevation and ordered his withdrawal from Rome to his family estates in Asia only in AD. 60 when, according even to Tacitus, he was being widely promoted as a possible successor to Nero.¹²⁰ Tacitus is keen to portray both of these men as innocent victims in AD. 62, but there may be some validity in Tigellinus' argument that both men had built up considerable local support in Gaul and Asia and may have been in contact with, in Sulla's case, the armies in Germany and, in Plautus' case, Corbulo's powerful army group in Syria and Armenia.¹²¹ It is, therefore, possible to argue that Tigellinus was less culpable in some respects than our sources have indicated. This is not to deny that the man was a villain. The extravagant gifts which, in desperation, he /

he bestowed on Titus Vinius' daughter in AD. 68 were, no doubt, the fruits of his extortion.¹²² He may well have been a torturer, although it is strange that Tacitus, who would surely have passed over no opportunity to blacken his name, fails to mention him by name as participating either in the persecution of the Christians in AD. 64¹²³ or in the torture of Epicharis in AD. 65.¹²⁴ The truth, of course, is that Tigellinus' spiritual home was Tammany Hall rather than Dachau. We may, therefore, conclude with some degree of confidence that, while Tigellinus was corrupt in a corrupt court, his political power was considerably less than has been ^{claimed} and his activities in this regard were those of a veral subordinate.

From Tacitus' narrative we can learn much about the methods used by Praetorian execution squads. In the case of Rubellius Plautus a centurion was despatched to Asia with sixty men. The large number of soldiers involved can be explained by their purpose which was to intimate the condemned man into committing suicide or, at worst, accepting execution passively. In Plautus' case the authorities may have rightly suspected that he had been informed of the imminent arrival of the Praetorians and the number of soldiers was greater than usual in anticipation of possible resistance. We should also note that, as in the execution of Messalina fourteen years earlier, an imperial freedman, in this case Pelago, was sent along to play the role of political commissar. Plautus was killed by the Praetorian centurion with a blow on the neck.¹²⁵ Three years later in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy similar tactics were employed against Seneca. His country house outside Rome was surrounded by a company /

company of soldiers while the Praetorian tribune went into the house to question Seneca. A Praetorian centurion was later sent to announce to the victim that he was to commit suicide.¹²⁶ Later that year the house of Lucius Antistius Vetus, the father-in-law of Rubellius Plautus, was also surrounded, although on this occasion more discreetly, before the death sentence was passed on him.¹²⁷ On occasions when the victim actively resisted, the killing could be a very unpleasant affair. It was only after a fierce struggle that, in AD. 65, at Bari, a Praetorian centurion was able to kill Lucius Junius Silanus.¹²⁸ The execution of Octavia on Pandateria in AD. 62 was a messy, horrible business. After refusing the order to commit suicide, she was bound, her veins were opened and she was finally suffocated in a vapour bath.¹²⁹ The effect of such killings on the morale of the Praetorians must remain a matter of conjecture, although it is noteworthy that the Praetorian tribune, Subrius Flavus, cited Octavia's murder as one of his reasons for participating in the Pisonian conspiracy.¹³⁰

Nero may well have sensed this discontent, for in AD. 64 he chose to emphasise his links with the Praetorians on two separate issues of coins.¹³¹ One coin shows Nero exercising with the Praetorian cavalry with the legend DECURSIO.¹³² On the other coin, inscribed ADLOCUT(10) COH(ORTIUM), the emperor is addressing the Praetorian cohorts accompanied by one of the prefects, Tigellinus or Faenius Rufus.¹³³ If these issues were an attempt by Nero to placate the Guard and forestall a coup, they were unsuccessful, for a sense of disgruntlement was leading several members of the Praetorian officer corps /

corps into a conspiracy to kill Nero and replace him with Gaius Calpurnius Piso.¹³⁴

Before turning to the plot itself we might profitably examine the reasons for the participation of the Praetorians. Some of these reasons have already been discussed. Nero's growing obsession with his musical talents and his clear intention to perform publicly in Rome at the second Neronia later in the year appalled many officers. The murder of Agrippina six years before was still considered an abomination by some. Others had actually witnessed Octavia's nightmarish end in AD. 62. Finally, Nero's role in and his behaviour during the great fire of the previous year were the subject of many damaging rumours.

Faenius Rufus gave his blessing to the coup although his involvement was characterised by less than total enthusiasm and by considerable circumspection.¹³⁵ His motives for lending his support to the plot were somewhat different from those of his officers. We should, however, be rightly suspicious of Tacitus' claim that Tigellinus' references to Faenius Rufus as Agrippina's lover drove him in the plot.¹³⁶ Nero was well aware of how close Rufus had previously been to Agrippina when he appointed him in AD. 62. Furthermore, it is difficult to believe that Tigellinus would have accused his colleague of an offence for which he had himself been exiled twenty-six years before. Can we really accept that he would have been so foolish as to expose himself to the inevitable counter-charges?¹³⁷ Faenius Rufus clearly felt threatened, but this was the result, not of one particular /

particular calumny, but of a whole campaign of innuendo and insinuation not concerned principally with his past transgressions, such as they were, but with possible perfidy in the future.

There seems little evidence to suggest the existence among the Praetorian plotters of any of the residual republicanism which affected their predecessors in AD. 41. On the contrary, it is probable that the Praetorian officer corps of AD. 65 approved of the principate as an essential focus for the loyalty of the Roman world and, indeed, regarded such a system as the only practical method of government. Yet there can be no denying the bitterness and disillusionment into which the Neronian regime had plunged many of the centurions and tribunes of the Guard. Close proximity to the regime's manipulators of power had revealed to them that there was no single coordinated leadership from the emperor, but instead continual wranglings about precedence among a plethora of powerful freedmen whom Nero tried to ride on a long rein in order to maintain his own position as supreme autocrat.¹³⁸ And in Nero himself they found, instead of a worthy recipient of their loyalty, a disinterested egoist.

It is evident from Tacitus that there was more than one plot and that it was only really with the involvement of Faenius Rufus that the Praetorian officers, led by the tribune Subrius Flavus and the centurion Sulpicius Asper, felt confident enough to engage in the detailed operational planning necessary for a serious assassination attempt.¹³⁹ Without this Praetorian participation the plot would never have passed beyond the stage of embittered and frustrated complainings /

complaining at late-night drinking parties, for the conspirators were, as might be imagined, not a homogeneous group.¹⁴⁰ This was to prove one of several fatal flaws in the plot which involved the assassination of Nero when he was attending the Circus during the Cerialia festival¹⁴¹ and the transport of Piso by Faenius Rufus from the temple of Ceres to the Praetorian camp where he was to be hailed as emperor.¹⁴²

The most serious weakness in the plan was the calibre of the civilian conspirators. With a few notable exceptions they were a motley crew of the hopeless and the humiliated - frustrated poets,¹⁴³ alcoholic degenerates¹⁴⁴ and, sadly and inevitably, a romantic republican.¹⁴⁵ Despite the fact that they had, through Claudius Senecio, access to the deliberations of Nero's inner circle of friends, this group inspired little confidence among the Praetorians who subsequently gave them as little information as possible about the actual plot.¹⁴⁶ The necessary precaution almost led to disaster when Epicharis, allegedly the mistress of Seneca's brother, Annaeus Mela, decided, apparently on her own initiative, to approach Volusius Proculus, a navarchus in the fleet at Misenum, who was known to be embittered by his failure to gain promotion despite his participation in the murder of Agrippina. Epicharis, however, had seriously misjudged either the sailor's loyalty to Nero or her own powers of persuasion, and was arrested after Proculus reported her overtures.¹⁴⁷ The manner of her detention, at least initially, may possibly indicate some sort of support for the conspirators at the highest level within Nero's court. For although she was imprisoned, she remained apparently /

apparently unharmed until after the wholesale confessions following Milichus' delation.¹⁴⁸ More importantly, her arrest prevented Volusius Proculus from infiltrating the conspiracy and was, therefore, of some benefit to the plotters. It is easy, and possibly correct, to suggest that this whole incident indicates only the lack of sophistication with regard to security measures of those around Nero. Yet there is clear evidence of undercover operations and the use of agents provocateurs during Tiberius' reign.¹⁴⁹ Why were such techniques not employed in AD. 65? The complicity of someone in Nero's closest circle must remain a possibility.

If, however, one man can be blamed for the failure of the whole plot, it must be Flavius Scaevinus. On the day before the planned assassination he returned home, possibly drunk, from a meeting with Antonius Natalis, a fellow plotter, and began to make ostentatious preparations for the coup.¹⁵⁰ The making ready of bandages and the sharpening of a dagger would have aroused suspicion in even duller brains than those of his freedman Milichus who, sensing profit in betrayal, reported what he knew to Epaphroditus, Nero's libertus a libellis.¹⁵¹ Scaevinus was arrested along with Natalis and, after initial denials, both men broke down under threat of torture.¹⁵² What followed was an unseemly race among the civilian conspirators to inform, in the hope of immunity, on as many of their colleagues as possible and to tell everything that they knew about the conspiracy.¹⁵³ Fortunately for the Praetorians, most of them knew very little.

Almost equally disastrous to the enterprise was the character of its figure-head /

figurehead, Gaius Calpurnius Piso. He was handsome, aristocratic and, when in his cups, a pleasing companion.¹⁵⁴ But he did not 'parade a forbidding morality',¹⁵⁵ and, in his theatrical ambitions, he rivalled Nero. He was, in fact, as Syme claims, 'an inoffensive Nero'.¹⁵⁶ We should, however, probably discount the story that Subrius Flavus intended to kill him and give the empire to Seneca after the coup.¹⁵⁷ He also displayed a timid indecisiveness which, in the early days of the conspiracy, allowed to pass a golden opportunity to kill the unguarded Nero at Baiae.¹⁵⁸ During the coup itself he again displayed this innate hesitancy, when he refused his friends' pleas to go from the temple of Ceres, where he had been waiting, to the Forum to appeal to the people or to the Praetorian camp to address the cohorts.¹⁵⁹

By this time, however, the conspiracy had already fallen apart. The civilian element had largely been arrested, there were large numbers of the German Guard and the Praetorian Guard loyal to Nero on the streets¹⁶⁰ and, most decisively, those Praetorians involved, not least Faenius Rufus, had already decided that their cause was lost and that their main hope of safety now lay in conspicuously displaying their loyalty to Nero and in removing all witnesses of their involvement in the plot.¹⁶¹ And so the tribune Statius Proxumus executed his fellow plotter, Plautius Lateranus, who would have been able to incriminate many Praetorians had he wished to do so, and whose hasty removal was judged essential to the survival of the Praetorian conspirators.¹⁶² Gavius Silvanus, tribune of the 12th Praetorian cohort,¹⁶³ who was deeply involved in the plot,¹⁶⁴ was /

was sent to question Seneca¹⁶⁵ and, after reporting to Nero and Tigellinus, returned, with Faenius Rufus' blessing, with an execution order for the former minister.¹⁶⁶ Time, however, was running out for the Praetorians in their attempts to avoid detection and Faenius Rufus' murderous attempts to save himself were doomed to failure.¹⁶⁷ Nero already suspected Praetorian involvement and not just at officer level.¹⁶⁸ And so, when Scaevinus named Faenius Rufus as a participant in the plot and this was confirmed by the other prisoners who were naturally desperate both to ingratiate themselves with their captors and to involve the disloyal prefect in their downfall, he was immediately arrested.¹⁶⁹ It was not long before the other Praetorian plotters were also detained. Subrius Flavus, in many ways Chaerea reborn, spoke bravely both to the emperor and to his executioner, another tribune, Veianus Niger, before he died.¹⁷⁰ The centurions involved, Sulpicius Asper, Maximus Scaurus and Venetus Paulus, also died well,¹⁷¹ in contrast to Faenius Rufus who died with the same pusillanimity as he had lived.¹⁷² The extent of Praetorian disloyalty alarmed Nero and he thought it expedient to encourage the loyalty of the Guard with a generous donative and a free corn allowance.¹⁷³ He also took firmer action. Besides Subrius Flavus, four Praetorian tribunes were dismissed.¹⁷⁴ Gavius Silvanus and Statius Proxumus were surprisingly spared, perhaps 'for co-operating in the punishment of their fellow conspirators',¹⁷⁵ or possibly because Nero deemed it unwise to indulge in too extensive a purge among the officer corps of the Guard. Both men, however, understanding the significance of the emperor's mercy, chose to commit suicide.¹⁷⁶

Nero and Tigellinus seized the opportunity during the coup and its aftermath to rid themselves of some personal enemies. So the consul Vestinus, whom Nero hated, found himself compelled by the Praetorian tribune Gerellanus and a cohort of soldiers to kill himself.¹⁷⁷ A former prefect, Rufrius Crispinus, was at this time expelled only to be put to death the following year.¹⁷⁸ Even to have been a friend of a conspirator was enough to get one exiled.¹⁷⁹

There were, of course, generous rewards for those who had helped suppress the coup. Nero thought highly enough of Tigellinus to grant him triumphal decorations and to allow statues of him to be set up in the Forum and the palace. His esteem for his prefect did not, nevertheless, extend so far as to permit him to occupy the post without a colleague. And so he appointed, as joint prefect with Tigellinus, Nymphidius Sabinus whose role in crushing the conspiracy was held to have been notable enough to merit the award of consular insignia.¹⁸⁰

One consequence of the coup may have been an acceleration in the promotion of easterners within the Guard. We know that Lucius Antonius Naso from Heliopolis in Syria was decorated by Nero and promoted to command the 9th Praetorian cohort.¹⁸¹ Perhaps Antonius Taurus, who, like Naso, was dismissed as an unrepentant Neronian from his Praetorian tribunate by Galba in AD. 68, was promoted at the same time.¹⁸² Indeed, it is possible that the advancement of easterners was not just a consequence of the conspiracy but a contributory cause and that those tribunes and centurions who participated were motivated to do so by the fear that they, as Italians, were /

were losing their privileged position within the Guard.¹⁸³

Certainly Gerellanus, who was already a Praetorian tribune before the coup, may have had eastern connections.¹⁸⁴ Perhaps it was his loyalty at this time which led to the promotion of other easterners. It is probably wiser, however, to regard this development as part of the larger preferment given to easterners with the administration generally.¹⁸⁵

What is particularly significant about the Praetorian role in this conspiracy is Nero's perception that the discontent affected many more than the officer corps.¹⁸⁶ We may see here unsubstantiated paranoia rather than justifiable prescience. But in such matters today's perception, however, misplaced, is often tomorrow's reality. Nero's doubts over their loyalty could only serve to encourage the disillusionment of the Praetorians. He was losing his hold on the very soul of the Guard and, although, in the absence of any alternative, the Praetorians were unlikely to initiate any action to depose him, they were also, after this time, less inclined to oppose those who might wish to do so.¹⁸⁷

The following year, AD. 66, saw the Praetorians involved in two very different, though equally high-profile, operations on Nero's behalf. They were present in full dress uniform at the magnificent culmination of Tiridates' financially ruinous visit to Italy when he did obeisance in the Forum before Nero.¹⁸⁸ They played a more sinister role in the prosecution by Cossutianus Capito, Tigellinus' son-in-law, of Thrasea Paetus, long hated by Nero, and Barea Soranus.¹⁸⁹

As /

As the senators entered the temple of Venus Genetrix to listen to the charges, the Praetorians were intimidatingly conspicuous. There were two cohorts, fully-armed, around the temple, the usual detachment in civilian dress on the approaches to the building as well as other companies in all the main public areas of the city. Their very presence, quite apart from their frightening appearance and open threats, overawed the senators, as it was meant to do, so that, even before Cossutianus Capito and Epirius Marcellus began their diatribes, Paetus' fate was sealed. The clear message which the Praetorians delivered that day for Nero was that senatorial dissidence, however passive, would not be tolerated and that recognition of that fact was a prerequisite of survival.¹⁹⁰

Nero believed that by this operation he had muted his domestic opponents and that it was safe for him to undertake the tour of Greece which he had thought it advisable to postpone two years before.¹⁹¹ If the Vinician conspiracy at Beneventum disabused him of the notion that the senatorial opposition had been completely demoralised, he did not allow it to divert him from his greatest ambition, to display his artistic talents in Greece before what he was certain would be appreciative audiences.¹⁹² He departed for Greece on the 25th of September, AD. 66, accompanied by Tigellinus and a detachment of Praetorians.¹⁹³ It is probable, however, that Nero regarded the Augustiani as more essential travelling companions than the members of the Guard.¹⁹⁴ This perhaps reflects Nero's rapidly diminishing hold on political reality.¹⁹⁵

It may be appropriate at this time to consider the personality of Nymphidius /

Nymphidius Sabinus, especially given the vital role which he was to play in Nero's fall. He claimed to be the illegitimate son of the emperor Gaius whom he resembled in physique and appearance.¹⁹⁶ He may have served as commander of an auxiliary cavalry regiment in Pannonia.¹⁹⁷ He was certainly in Rome in AD. 65 during the Pisonian conspiracy in the suppression of which he distinguished himself.¹⁹⁸ His rise mirrors that of others of eastern origin who succeeded to the large equestrian prefectures in the later part of Nero's reign.¹⁹⁹ The absence of Nero and Tigellinus in Greece between September of AD. 66 and the early months of AD. 68 left him in sole charge of the Praetorian cohorts in Rome. He may well have seized this opportunity 'to achieve the control of the Guard he was soon to demonstrate'.²⁰⁰ On the other hand, there is nothing to suggest that, until the final days of the reign, he was other than a loyal Neronian and, as we shall see, even then his conduct was perhaps less perfidious than has been suggested.²⁰¹

By the time Nero returned to Italy in early AD. 68 in deference to Helius' desperate pleas, there were few sections of Roman society which he had not succeeded in antagonising.²⁰² The Senate, the provincial armies and even the people, whose support Nero clearly cherished most, had reasons for resentment and bitterness.²⁰³ All of this was rather misleadingly masked by the hysteria which greeted Nero on his triumphal entry into Rome.²⁰⁴

How widespread discontent was among the Praetorians at this stage, after Nero's return but before the battle of Vesontio is unclear. In the earlier part of the reign the Praetorians had been quite prepared /

prepared to carry out unpopular orders and incur public disdain, as at the execution of Pedanius Secundus' slaves in AD. 61 or during the riots on Octavia's behalf the following year.²⁰⁵ But the situation had changed in several important ways. Nero was now more isolated than ever before from the actuality around him, partly due to his own artistic obsessions and partly due to the machinations of his freedmen.²⁰⁶ Given this situation, it is evident that the outcome of an imperial order was often the product of chance.²⁰⁷ Such weakness and lack of firm control at the centre are unlikely to have inspired much confidence among the Praetorians. It is also possible that those detachments which were in Greece with Nero may have been alienated by the hard labouring tasks which the emperor imposed on them in connection with his plan to dig a canal through the Isthmus joining the Saronic and Corinthian Gulfs.²⁰⁸ They will also have brought back reports of Nero's disgusting conduct, both private and public, during his time in Greece.²⁰⁹ And they will have found an eager audience for their scandals among those cohorts who had stayed in Rome protecting the interests of an emperor who was now reluctant, for fear of damaging his voice, even to address them.²¹⁰

Tacitus claims that Nero was driven from his throne by messages and rumours rather than by arms.²¹¹ It has been suggested that he could have avoided this had he acted more decisively.²¹² But while the situation certainly called for a dramatic and impressive gesture, Nero chose to indulge his passion for showy melodrama. As reality forced its way into his fantasy world, his responses were predictably theatrical ranging from studied indifference on hearing of Vindex's revolt,²¹³ through contrived hysteria²¹⁴ on receiving reports of Galba's rebellion /

rebellion,²¹⁵ until, after Vesontio and the defection of the German legions,²¹⁶ he returned once again to the safety of his megalomaniac dreams in which he envisaged himself as prefect of Egypt.²¹⁷

And what of the Praetorians in this crisis? Nymphidius Sabinus was no more prescient than many others in his certainty that Nero was doomed.²¹⁸ It was vital for him to be seen to be acting against Nero's interest at this time, for perhaps, as Brunt has suggested, his 'one hope of expiating his own crimes was to give Nero the final push and earn the gratitude of Galba'.²¹⁹ So in Galba's name, though without his sanction, Nymphidius Sabinus offered each Praetorian 30,000 sesterces to break their oath of loyalty to Nero and to declare for Galba.²²⁰ This treason was understood and welcomed by the Guard.²²¹ Bishop credits Tigellinus with the rapid mobilisation of the army in North Italy.²²² If this was the case, it was his last action for Nero, for he was incurably ill, possibly with syphilis, and was possibly relieved to obey Nymphidius Sabinus' instructions to lay down his sword.²²³ Besides he had had the foresight and, during his years of power, the opportunity to prepare for such a crisis. He had put Titus Vinius, Galba's principal adviser, into his debt.²²⁴ And so it was with some confidence that he retired to enjoy the company of his mistresses and the fruits of his blackmail.

As the army in north Italy fell apart and news reached Rome of further revolts, Nero seriously considered fleeing to Egypt,²²⁵ a country by which he had always been fascinated²²⁶ and where he was confident /

confident, possibly erroneously, of receiving a loyal welcome.²²⁷

However, at a meeting in the Servilian gardens his attempts to persuade the tribunes and centurions of the Guard to accompany him in flight resulted in humiliating failure and the disdainful suggestion that he consider suicide.²²⁸ He retired in despair and,

when he awoke at mid-night, made the ominous discovery that the Praetorian cohort which should have been on duty had disappeared.²²⁹

Even Nero now recognised the hopelessness of his situation but, despite his talk of suicide and some typical histrionic posturing, he could not yet bring himself to end his life.²³⁰ And so in the early

hours of June the 9th²³¹ he fled on horseback with only four attendants to the villa of his freedman Phaon, having made a pitiable attempt to disguise himself.²³² As he passed the

Praetorian camp he heard with what bitterness we can only imagine the soldiers inside hailing Galba as emperor.²³³ Farce overtook pathos

as a former Praetorian guardsman recognised the fugitive and greeted him.²³⁴ At the villa there was more intolerable delay²³⁵ and the

final tragic affectation, 'qualis artifex pereo',²³⁶ until he heard that the Senate had decreed that he should be flogged to death.²³⁷

With no options left and the sounds of a search-party from the Praetorian cavalry drawing ever closer, he finally with the aid of his freedman Epaphroditus stabbed himself in his throat.²³⁸

His final words, addressed to a Praetorian centurion who was trying to stem the flow of blood from his wound, were a bitter reproach on the Guard's loyalty.²³⁹ Such a rebuke was unwarranted and unjust,

for it was Nero himself who, by his failure to appreciate the reciprocal /

reciprocal nature of loyalty, made the defection of the Guard certain and inevitable. Galba was acceptable to the Praetorians only as a guarantor of their future employment. They never loved him as they had once loved Nero. The sad truth is that the Guard's loyalty was not won by Galba's virtues, but lost through Nero's vices.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRAETORIAN GUARD FROM THE DEATH OF NERO TO THE ACCESSION OF VESPASIAN

The Praetorian Guard had been unswervingly loyal to the Julio-Claudian dynasty until the very end of Nero's reign. The Praetorians had been induced to desert him only by the lies of Nymphidius Sabinus, faithlessly told and faithlessly heard, that Nero had already sailed away to Egypt and, more importantly, by his promise of a donative of 30,000 sesterces per man¹ if they declared for Galba. Even then many had felt ambivalently, or so they later claimed, over their abandonment of Nero.² Within a short time a sense of collective guilt, which was not to be ultimately exorcised for 18 months, began to consume the Praetorians. They started to rationalise their desertion, partly accepting the official version, as expounded by Nymphidius Sabinus and later, in desperation, by Gaius Calpurnius Piso Licinianus,³ that Nero had abandoned them. But they also, as is clear from the speech of Antonius Honoratus,⁴ began to seek scapegoats in Nero's Praetorian prefects, Tigellinus, universally detested, quite apart from his many vices, as a 'desertor ac proditor',⁵ and more especially, Nymphidius Sabinus who bore the greater responsibility for Nero's fall.⁶

At first, in the period immediately following Nero's suicide, Nymphidius enjoyed considerable popularity among the Praetorians largely because of the promised donative.⁷ In the absence of Galba, who was still far away in Spain, he usurped the role of Galba's plenipotentiary in Rome, flaunting his power more ostentatiously than any prefect since Seianus. He sought to ingratiate himself with the people /

people by delivering into their hands Spiculus and Aponius, two of the worst of Nero's creatures. He was courted by powerful members of the Senate whom he, in turn, entertained at banquets in the emperor's name. He removed the broken and sick Tigellinus from office and initiated a campaign to send a deputation to Galba demanding that he be made prefect for life without a colleague.⁸ Sometimes his ambition was even less well clothed as can be seen from his vaunting of his allegedly imperial ancestry and the inclusion in his entourage, which looked less like a prefect's staff than an imperial court, of Sporus, Nero's catamite. His behaviour led many to assume that he aspired not to the sole prefecture of the Guard, as he claimed, but to the principate itself.⁹

Nemesis was not far distant. Galba, who did not lack information from Rome, could not be induced either by Nymphidius' gifts or his scaremongering to retain him as prefect.¹⁰ The failure of Gellianus, whom Nymphidius had sent to Spain to press his case with the emperor,¹¹ was signalled by Galba's appointment of Cornelius Laco as prefect of the Guard.¹² Nymphidius rightly viewed the imposition of a joint prefect as the first step in a process which would inevitably end in his dismissal. Desperation now forced him to change his tactics.¹³ Rumours were deliberately encouraged to the effect that Galba was the aged pawn of devious and vicious advisers.¹⁴ Which, in truth, he was. Revolution was openly discussed and in the fool's paradise of Nymphidius' circle the prospects for success were judged to be good. Those like Clodius Macer, who suggested that support for such a coup might be limited, were ignored.¹⁵ A plan of sorts was hatched, its only /

only virtue its simplicity. Nymphidius was to go to the Praetorian camp at midnight with his supporters and read to the Praetorians a speech written for him by Cingonius Varro, the consul designate.¹⁶ It was hoped that the Praetorians would then renounce their allegiance to Galba and espouse the cause of Nymphidius.¹⁷ In truth, it was a hope born of fantasy, for Rome was not yet ready for a Praetorian emperor.¹⁸ The plan was betrayed, unsurprisingly. There could be profit for some in Nymphidius' hopelessness. When he reached the camp, he found that on the orders of the tribune on duty, Antonius Honoratus, the gates had been shut. The walls were lined with grimfaced Guardsmen who saw in the suppression of the coup an opportunity both ^{to} impress Galba with their loyalty and to salve their consciences by avenging Nero's death.¹⁹ Nymphidius, understanding the ruination of his plans, joined the Praetorians on the walls in shouting pro-Galban slogans. The dissimulation was transparent. Honoratus, who had no intention of allowing Nymphidius to leave alive, ordered the gates to be opened. The prefect entered, aware perhaps of the doom which awaited him. No sooner had the gates closed than Nymphidius' band was attacked. The shield of Septimius, one of his supporters, took the force of a spear aimed at the prefect. But the reprieve was temporary. He was chased into a barrack-room where he was finally killed.²⁰

The Praetorians, believing that their desertion of Nero had been balanced by their murder of Nymphidius, looked forward in keen anticipation to the arrival of Galba who would, they were confident, now pay them the donative promised in his name. They were to be bitterly /

bitterly disillusioned. Galba valued firm discipline over expediency.²¹ His assertion that he levied, not bought soldiers²² was for him, despite its obvious theatricality, a tenet of faith which he was certainly not prepared to compromise for 'the petted creatures of Tigellinus and Nymphidius'.²³ He did not waver in this refusal until, perhaps the very end,²⁴ ignoring even the golden opportunity offered by the adoption of Piso at the Praetorian camp on the 10th of January AD. 69 to make a gesture in this direction.²⁵ This issue was to remain throughout his principate a source of discontent and resentment among the Praetorians who regarded Galba's unwillingness to pay the donative not only as a breach of faith but, more fundamentally, as a failure to acknowledge the pre-eminent role, especially at the accession of an emperor, which they had enjoyed since AD. 41.²⁶

Equally disastrous to Galba's relationship with the Praetorians was his reluctance to forgive those whom he suspected of involvement in Nymphidius' coup. He could not be persuaded to confine his purge to Nymphidius' fellow-conspirators, who were, in large degree, from outside the Guard, but chose instead to extend it to include all the prefect's associates which, by the very nature of his duties, encompassed the entire officer corps of the Guard.²⁷ In an atmosphere in which guilt by association, and indeed even by proximity, was assumed and innocence had to be proved, many centurions and tribunes came to feel that an emperor so ready to impugn their honour did not deserve their loyalty.

We know that two Praetorian tribunes, Antonius Naso and Antonius Taurus, were dismissed from their posts by Galba.²⁸ The precise reason /

reason for their dismissal must remain a matter of conjecture. There is no direct evidence to suggest that they were linked to Nymphidius' attempted coup. Tacitus indeed mentions their dismissals among a number of measures taken by Galba after Piso's adoption on the 10th of January AD. 69. Are we to assume that they were removed because of their Vitellian sympathies? This seems unlikely, especially in view of the subsequent career of Antonius Naso who was given a primipilary post in legio XIV Gemina by Otho.²⁹ Had they then favoured the adoption of Otho rather than Piso more enthusiastically than was judged proper? This must be seriously considered, although we should note that Titus Vinus, the most prominent advocate of Otho's adoption, managed to survive without any apparent threat to his position or, as far as we know, his influence.³⁰ Is it possible that they were suspected of involvement in the initial stages of Otho's coup? But this would run counter to the accounts of our sources which suggest that the coup, when it did occur, came as a complete surprise to Galba and Laco.³¹ Both Pflaum and Jalabert suggest that Antonius Naso, who had enjoyed a series of rapid promotions to his Praetorian tribunate during the final years of Nero's principate, was dismissed because of 'son attachement à la dynastie julio-claudienne'.³² However Tacitus' dating of the dismissals tends to militate against this argument, for it seems improbable that the notoriously severe Galba would have tolerated Neronian loyalists in the Guard for so long. Furthermore such a view is explicitly contradicted by Suetonius who tells us that none of the Praetorian tribunes and centurions, whatever loyalty they may have previously felt, were willing to accompany /

accompany Nero on his planned flight to Égypt.³³ I suggest that a preferable explanation would be to link the dismissals of these tribunes, both of whom were from the Roman colony of Heliopolis in Syria,³⁴ with Galba's disbanding of the German Guard³⁵ and view such actions as an attempt by Galba to purge the Rome garrison of non-Italian elements. Such a purge could have been prompted by a desire on the part of a conservative emperor to re-establish the dominance of Italians, which had, perhaps, been threatened during the final years of Nero's principate, within the officer corps of the Guard. On the other hand, Tacitus' dating suggests a more specific motivation. Is it possible that Galba was attempting by his actions to promote the concept of the Guard as an Italian national force and to portray himself, an Italian emperor threatened by the legions of Germany, as the natural focus of Praetorian fidelity.³⁶

Whatever the reasons for the dismissals of Antonius Naso and Antonius Taurus, it is quite clear that Galba had by January of AD. 69 forfeited the loyalty of many Praetorians, officers and men alike. Some were disappointed in their hopes of a donative, while others were anxious over the effects of future purges. Many, accustomed to Nero's open contempt for the Senate, will have reacted with dismay to the favour and apparent respect which Galba accorded to that body.³⁷ Yet the emperor was not without his supporters, and such dissent as existed was expressed in furtive complaints and a sullen broodiness. Any thoughts of conspiracy were, before the 10th of January, confined to the darker fantasies of the more embittered Praetorians. Yet the tinder was ready; all that was lacking /

lacking was a spark to set it ablaze. Marcus Salvius Otho was to provide that spark.³⁸

Otho, desperate to become the old emperor's heir, worked hard to ingratiate himself with the Praetorians, implicitly acknowledging how vital their support would be with regard to the succession. While accompanying Galba from Spain, he took care to appear affable to the Praetorian cohort which escorted the emperor on that journey.³⁹ In Rome his continuing concern for the Praetorians contrasted sharply with Galba's attitude which fluctuated between studied indifference and overt suspicion. He took the trouble to learn the names of individual Praetorians⁴⁰ and lost no opportunity to encourage the fond reminiscences of the older soldiers over the halcyon days of Nero's principate.⁴¹ He used his influence with the emperor and the powerful members of his court to help some win promotion.⁴² So eager was he to win popularity that he was prepared to increase his already huge debts⁴³ so that he might have money to lend to needy Praetorians.⁴⁴ He was especially attentive to the needs of the inner bodyguard, the speculatores, to the extent of buying a farm for one of that unit, Cocceius Proculus, who had become involved in a dispute with his neighbour over boundaries.⁴⁵ By such actions and by his deliberately ambiguous statements about Galba,⁴⁶ Otho clearly left himself open to charges of subversion which might have been laid against him had Cornelius Laco, the Praetorian prefect, been more attentive to his duty and less obsessed with surpassing his rival, Vinius, in influence with Galba.

The adoption of Piso Licinianus placed Otho in a hopeless position and /

and forced him to make common cause with the still influential remnants of Tigellinus' clique,⁴⁷ one of whom, Maevius Pudens, had already, perhaps on his own initiative, begun a more sinister subversion of the Praetorians by presenting 100 sesterces to all the members of the cohort which escorted Galba whenever he dined with Otho.⁴⁸ Otho's freedman, Onomastus, commissioned two of the inner bodyguard, Barbius Proculus and Veturius, to foster the dissent and disaffection which already existed not only in the Praetorian Guard⁴⁹ but also among the legionary and auxiliary detachments temporarily based in the environs of Rome.⁵⁰ Although many were aware that a coup was imminent and were sympathetic to its aims, the active conspirators numbered only twenty-three.⁵¹ When, on the 15th of January, Otho left Galba sacrificing at the temple of Apollo and met this group at the Golden Milestone, he was dismayed at the paucity of support.⁵² Despite his apparent reluctance, Otho was placed in a litter and carried to the Praetorian camp.⁵³ By the time he reached the camp he had around 50 men with him.⁵⁴ It was at this stage that Nymphidius' plot had fallen apart, but that, of course, was before the Praetorians had practical experience of Galba's concept of discipline. Nor was the tribune on duty, Julius Martialis, disposed to act as vigorously in his emperor's interests as Antonius Honoratus had been.⁵⁵ Those tribunes most loyal to Galba were, in fact, with the emperor at the temple of Apollo and in their absence none of the other tribunes or centurions were prepared to take the lead in suppressing the coup.

When rumours of what was happening reached Galba, he reacted with commendable /

commendable decisiveness. Piso addressed the Praetorian cohort on duty⁵⁶ and their response to his plea for loyalty was not unfavourable, although the remaining speculatores had by now disappeared.⁵⁷

Three Praetorian tribunes, Cetrius Severus, Subrius Dexter and Pompeius Longinus were despatched to the camp to discover the extent of the mutiny and to assess whether it might yet be crushed.⁵⁸

Piso was to follow once the situation became clearer.⁵⁹ Help was also sought from the Illyrian and German detachments in the Vipsanian Colonnade and the Hall of Liberty.⁶⁰ Galba's unpopularity ensured the failure of these counter-measures. Pompeius Longinus, a close friend of the emperor was beaten up at the Praetorian camp and his two colleagues imprisoned.⁶¹ Piso, hearing the roars of support with which the soldiers in the Praetorian camp greeted Otho's speech, decided to turn back to the city.⁶² Although the detachment from the German legions was eager to help Galba, none of the other units were prepared to listen to his envoys.⁶³ The soldiers of Legio I Adiutrix were, as expected, violently hostile to Galba⁶⁴ who now had the support only of the fickle Roman mob and of his immediate entourage, the principal members of which, Laco and Vinus, continued to the end that bitter squabbling in which they had indulged, to their emperor's ruin, throughout his principate.⁶⁵

After putting on a breastplate, Galba left his palace, pausing only to rebuke Julius Atticus, a member of his inner bodyguard, who now claimed, mischievously and maliciously, to have killed Otho.⁶⁶ It was the last reprimand of the old disciplinarian. Already, in the Praetorian camp, his statue had been overturned⁶⁷ and the soldiers, Praetorians /

Praetorians and legionaries alike, galvanised by Otho's rhetoric and intoxicated by their own boldness, were heading towards the centre of Rome with but one thought in their minds - to kill Galba.⁶⁸ When the first cavalrymen appeared, Atilius Vergilio, the standard-bearer of the cohort escorting Galba, tore the emperor's portrait from the standard and threw it to the ground.⁶⁹ The mob, so vociferous in their cries for Otho's head shortly before, melted away.⁷⁰ Galba, his litter overturned, was butchered in the Forum near the Lacus Curtius.⁷¹ Vinus died, despite his claims to have known about the conspiracy, a short distance away in front of the temple of Julius Caesar.⁷² The bravery of a Praetorian centurion, Sempronius Densus, allowed Piso to find a temporary sanctuary in the temple of Vesta.⁷³ But the rebels had little time for religious niceties. He was dragged out and murdered near the door of the temple.⁷⁴ The heads of the victims were placed on poles beside the Praetorian and legionary standards.⁷⁵ So began Otho's principate, born in blood.

The new emperor's first task was to reimpose some form of discipline on the Praetorians. But he had, by encouraging them to break their oath of loyalty to Galba, created a monster of greater potency than he realised and he was never able throughout his principate to gain complete control over the Guard.⁷⁶ This was, in large degree, due to the different perceptions of the Praetorians and of Otho as to the exact nature of the relationship between them. The Praetorians believed that it was due to their efforts that Otho had become princeps. They were also convinced that his continuing tenure of the principate was dependent on their vigilance against senatorial conspiracies. /

conspiracies.

For Otho the issue was rather more complex. He could not deny the importance of Praetorian support both in his accession and as the bulwark of his principate. Neither did he wish to deny this, for it suited him to be able to portray himself in the Senate not as the instigator of a bloody conspiracy, but as the reluctant beneficiary of a violence which he personally abhorred.⁷⁷ He acknowledged his debt to the Praetorians by allowing them to choose their own prefects and by approving a change, which they demanded, to the system of buying furloughs from centurions.⁷⁸ Thereafter he began to distance himself somewhat from them, for he knew that, if the Praetorians were perceived to be dictating the direction of his principate, the consequences were likely to be ruinous to his attempts to win genuine support within the Senate.⁷⁹

But the achievement of such a balance needed both time and the absence of external pressure. Neither of these was granted to Otho. From the very beginning of his principate he had to contend with a propaganda onslaught by the Vitellians which was both vigorous and subtle. Fabius Valens wrote to the Praetorian and urban cohorts, pointing out the imbalance in strength between the German legions and themselves and suggesting, with his tongue firmly in his cheek, that precedence should be given to Vitellius' claims since the rebellion of the German legions occurred before the conspiracy which led to Otho's accession.⁸⁰ The Vitellians also issued a 'military' group of anonymous denarii, bearing on the reverse the inscriptions FIDES PRAETORIANORUM /

PRAETORIANORUM and CONCORDIA PRAETORIANORUM.⁸¹ The purpose of these issues, which omitted all reference to Vitellius, was, in part, to invoke a spirit of unity between the legions and the Praetorians and to influence the Praetorians to desert Otho and join the German legions.⁸² But, in reality, the Vitellians had little doubt about the extent of the Praetorians' commitment to the Othonian cause. We know that they were determined not to allow the Praetorian contingent of an Othonian embassy to Germany to communicate in any way with the legionaries.⁸³ We may therefore detect a more subtle motive behind their production of such coinage. For the Vitellians, realising the futility of any attempt to seduce the Praetorians from their loyalty to Otho, may have regarded these issues as a device with which to convince the Praetorians that there were those with Vitellian sympathies even within their own corps. In this way they could destabilise the regime by increasing the amount of suspicion felt generally throughout Rome and especially between the Praetorians and their centurions and tribunes.⁸⁴

This brooding suspicion erupted into fatal violence in early March during a misguided attempt by Varius Crispinus, a Praetorian tribune, using troops of the 17th urban cohort from Ostia,⁸⁵ to remove a large amount of weapons from the armoury of the Praetorian camp.⁸⁶ The intended destination of these weapons remains unclear, though it is reasonable to assume that the move was connected with the general mobilisation which Otho had ordered.⁸⁷ Crispinus' decision to carry out his mission late at night was, given the pervasive atmosphere of suspicion among the Praetorians, foolish in the extreme. The Praetorians /

Praetorians, many of whom had taken drink, were quick to see in Crispinus' midnight manoeuvres the beginning of the sort of conspiracy, involving their own officers and forces controlled by the Senate, which they had long feared. Their reaction was predictably violent. Crispinus and some centurions were killed at the camp. Then, as they had done seven weeks earlier, the Praetorians galloped towards Rome, to save their emperor from the plot which they imagined was about to engulf him. The banquet at which Otho was entertaining many senators and their wives broke up in confusion as Otho sent the Praetorian prefects to try, at least, to delay the rampaging troops.⁸⁸ That they were partly successful is shown by the fact that most of Otho's guests managed to get away unharmed. By the time the Praetorians actually burst into the palace, their intended victims were gone and they exorcised their rage by wounding Julius Martialis, the Praetorian tribune, who for the second time in two months found himself the object of his men's fury, and Vitellius Saturninus, probably the commander of Legio I Adiutrix.⁸⁹ There was much verbal abuse of the other tribunes and centurions present and it was only after Otho himself spoke to the rioters that they reluctantly returned to their camp.⁹⁰

On the following day Licinius Proculus and Plotius Firmus, the prefects, each in his own way, harangued the troops for their misconduct. But they were also careful to defuse the Praetorians' anger by announcing that a donative of 5000 sesterces was to be paid to each soldier.⁹¹ When Otho eventually entered the camp, he was immediately surrounded by tribunes and centurions protesting over the /

the lack of discipline among the Praetorians.⁹² Otho was aware, as his speech clearly shows, of the limits of his power when dealing with the Praetorians. His words were specifically devised to offend no-one. Although he ordered the execution of two of the ringleaders and made much of the virtues of strict discipline,⁹³ he could not afford to alienate his main source of support and he chose to attribute the entire incident to the "nimia pietas" of the Praetorians.⁹⁴ The more extreme of the Praetorians were now convinced not only that their actions of the previous night had been vindicated by Otho's words, but also that the emperor, despite his fulsome praise of the Senate, had given his tacit approval to the clandestine surveillance of the activities of senators whom they suspected of sympathising with Vitellius.⁹⁵

Every action of Otho's generals, Suetonius Paulinus, Marius Celsus, Annius Gallus and Vestricius Spurinna was judged by the Praetorians in the light of these suspicions. Caution was interpreted as cowardice, the avoidance of recklessness as treachery. Nor were the Praetorians slow to voice such suspicions to Otho himself⁹⁶ who, pressured in this way, began to rely less on his experienced commanders than on Titianus, his brother and, disastrously, on Licinius Proculus, one of the Praetorian prefects, an inveterate intriguer, whose military experience was limited to policing and parade-ground activities⁹⁷ and who was to add his own particular brand of incompetent leadership to an army in which indiscipline was already endemic.

This anarchy dogged the naval expeditionary force which Otho sent to Liguria in the hope that its presence would force Fabius Valens to split his forces.⁹⁸ However, the main activities of these soldiers, which included a contingent from the Praetorian Guard, as they sailed north, were plunder and murder.⁹⁹ When one of their commanders, Aemilius Pacensis, a loyal supporter of Otho, tried to stop such excesses, they imprisoned him.¹⁰⁰ If this venture was later considered a success, it can only be because it turned out to be less than the total failure it initially promised to be.¹⁰¹

The situation was little better in the main Othonian army which had moved northwards to defend the line of the river Po. The belief that Spurrinna and even their own officers were not acting with the necessary vigour led the 3 Praetorian cohorts at Placentia to advance from their secure base into a dangerously exposed position¹⁰² before distaste for the work involved in building defensive fortifications,¹⁰³ allied to a realisation of the likely consequences if Caecina's legions caught them in such a weak position, allowed wiser counsels to prevail and the cohorts meekly followed Spurrinna back to Placentia.¹⁰⁴

Even success on the battlefield, if it was less than total, was not enough for some in Otho's army. Martius Macer, who commanded a detachment of gladiators on the south bank of the Po opposite Cremona, was denounced as a traitor when he withdrew his puny force which had routed some Vitellian auxiliaries in a raid on the northern bank of the river rather than recklessly permit it to face the might of Caecina's legions.¹⁰⁵ If victory was so judged, there could be /

be little doubt how the Praetorians would react in the face of defeat. Their response to the loss of the battle of Bedriacum where they had fought bravely was predictably violent. In their despair and confusion they attributed this defeat to high-level treachery¹⁰⁶ and were with difficulty restrained from massacring the members of the Senate at Brixellum and Mutina.¹⁰⁷

The defeat at Bedriacum and the collapse of the Othonian cause found his Praetorians scattered throughout northern Italy.

Vitellius was eager to disarm and disband them, for, fully-armed and believing that victory had been snatched from them by deceit, they were clearly dangerous.¹⁰⁸ Any doubts he may have had over the wisdom of this move were dispelled by a riot in Turin during which two Praetorian cohorts joined with units of the 14th legion against some Batavian auxiliaries of Vitellius.¹⁰⁹ It was clear that a wholesale purge was unavoidable. Yet it was in Vitellius' interest to ensure that the process was free of bloodshed. There were some executions but, at least as far as the Praetorians were concerned, they affected only those who had claimed rewards for their roles in the murder of Galba.¹¹⁰ The terms which the new emperor offered to Otho's Praetorians were not ungenerous. They received honourable discharges and retained their right to an allocation of land or a money payment in lieu.¹¹¹ Some may have settled in the district around Forum Julii or possibly at Aquileia.¹¹² Unfortunately for Vitellius the process of demobilisation had scarcely been completed when in August the news of the Flavian revolt offered the resentful Praetorians an opportunity for revenge which they were quick to seize.¹¹³

Vitellius himself was not a brave man and felt the need to be well guarded at all times. He could hardly be seen among the crowd of his bodyguards as he climbed the Capitol.¹¹⁴ When Helvidius Priscus spoke out against him in the Senate, he immediately summoned the Praetorian tribunes to his side.¹¹⁵ But Vitellius' personal fears over his security were not the main reason for his re-organisation of the Praetorian Guard.¹¹⁶ The uncertain military outlook certainly played a part. The most important factor, however, was the expectation of Vitellius' soldiers that they had merited promotion to the Praetorian or urban cohorts. As Fabia puts it, 'Vitellius ne choisit pas ses prétoriens, il se les laissa imposer'.¹¹⁷ To accommodate the large numbers who volunteered for service in the Rome garrison, both the number of cohorts and their effective were increased. 16 Praetorian cohorts were established, each 1000 strong.¹¹⁸ Suetonius indicates that the old cohorts were completely disbanded.¹¹⁹ If we accept this, we have to assume that up to 20,000 men - Tacitus' figure - were removed from those legions with Vitellius in Rome.¹²⁰ If Vitellius' army was 60,000 strong, as Garzetti estimates, when he entered Rome, then it is possible that 20,000 men could have been transferred to the Rome militia without destroying the combat effectiveness of the legions.¹²¹ But 60,000 seems an enormous figure. There were 8 legions on the Rhine of which Vitellius brought 3 complete, and vexillationes from the rest and from those in Britain - hardly more than 30,000 at most, probably fewer. We should, therefore, take some care over Tacitus' large figures. Keppie rightly points out that, if 20,000 men were withdrawn from Vitellius' legions, they 'would have all but ceased to exist as fighting formations which clearly was not the case'.¹²²

Vitellius' Praetorians did not participate in the second battle of Bedriacum, where their experience and enthusiasm for their emperor's cause were sorely missed. But it is easy to be wise after the event. There were clearly reasons why Vitellius did not commit his Praetorians at this stage in the campaign. He may have had suspicions as to the loyalty of his own generals, justifiably in the case of Caecina,¹²³ less excusably as regards Fabius Valens who, somewhat surprisingly, shared Vitellius' disinclination to send the Praetorians away from Rome and to the battlefront.¹²⁴ The dubious loyalty of the fleet at Misenum may have been a factor in this decision.¹²⁵ But surely the main cause of the emperor's reluctance to permit his Praetorians to leave Rome was his fear, shared by the soldiers themselves, that there existed within Rome a Flavian fifth column whose treacherous intentions were thwarted only because of the presence of the Praetorians.

The Praetorians also became convinced, especially after the Flavian victory in the second battle of Bedriacum, that many of their officers were, at best, lukewarm in their commitment to the Vitellian cause or, at worst, actively conspiring with the Flavians both in Rome and on the battlefront.¹²⁶ These suspicions hardened when Julius Priscus and Alfenus Varus, the Praetorian prefects, halted the 14 Praetorian cohorts and cavalry, which Vitellius had given them to counter the Flavian thrust down the Adriatic coast, on the western side of the Appennines at Mevania, before withdrawing 20 miles to Narnia. Although these moves were justifiable and even sensible on purely military grounds, they had a disastrous effect on the /

the confidence of the Praetorians in their officers who they now believed were colluding with the Flavians.¹²⁷ It is against this background that we should judge the desertions of a considerable number of tribunes and centurions from the Praetorian army at Narnia.¹²⁸ Although it is possible that these men defected to the Flavians as a result of some prior arrangement, it seems more likely that the desertions were prompted by the increasing hostility which they, as officers, faced from their own troops as the likelihood of a Flavian victory increased.

On the 15th of December the Vitellian troops at Narnia capitulated.¹²⁹ On the following day Antonius Primus moved from Narnia to Ocriculum, while Petilius Cerialis advanced 'per agrum Sabinum' to approach Rome from the north-east.¹³⁰ The situation in the south where Lucius Vitellius was attempting with 6 Praetorian cohorts and 500 cavalry to take Terracina was unclear.¹³¹ Both Primus and Mucianus had written to Vitellius urging him to abdicate and guaranteeing his safety and that of his family.¹³² On the 18th, Vitellius, in despair, attempted to deposit the imperial insignia in the temple of Concordia, but his troops refused to let him pass and he was compelled to return to his palace.¹³³ His own vacillation was matched by the Praetorians' intransigence. It was to prove a disastrous combination.

On the evening of the 17th Flavius Sabinus, despite his initial reluctance to mobilise the Flavian supporters within Rome,¹³⁴ called a meeting of leading senators and equites, together with the officers of the urban cohorts and the Vigiles.¹³⁵ He had already, in his capacity as praefectus urbi, written to the tribunes of the Praetorian /

Praetorian Guard urging them to keep a tight control over their men in the period between Vitellius' abdication and the arrival of the main Flavian force under Primus.¹³⁶ His aim was probably to confine the Praetorians to their barracks while using the 3 urban cohorts at his disposal to police the city and to prevent any resistance by Vitellian hardliners. But what seemed to Sabinus a sensible precaution, was perceived by the 3 Praetorian cohorts as the culmination of the treachery whose existence, however latent, they had long suspected.¹³⁷

Vitellius' failure to abdicate frustrated Sabinus' hopes for a peaceful handover of power, since it gave encouragement to the diehards, the 'promptissimi Vitellianorum'.¹³⁸ On the other hand, Sabinus' plans were too far advanced and his own involvement in the affair too conspicuous for him to contemplate postponement or cancellation. The inevitable clash occurred.¹³⁹ Sabinus and a mixed group of Flavian adherents took refuge on the south-western height of the Capitoline hill on which stood the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. A besieging force of sorts took up positions around them. But these soldiers were indisciplined and careless, perhaps deliberately, since, the Praetorians' fanaticism notwithstanding, a Flavian victory now appeared certain. Sabinus took advantage of the gaps in the Vitellian cordon to get potential hostages into the Capitol and to send a messenger to Antonius Primus at Ocreculum outlining his position and asking for immediate help.¹⁴⁰ Yet there was no real sense of desperation at this time and Sabinus still hoped that what he regarded as a misunderstanding could be cleared up by re-opening /

re-opening negotiations with Vitellius.

On the following morning, the 19th of December, he therefore sent his representative, Cornelius Martialis, to Vitellius on the Palatine.¹⁴¹

Vitellius' position had by this time improved considerably, due largely to the efforts of his Praetorians.

News had reached him of the capture of Terracina by his brother Lucius.¹⁴²

The 6 Praetorian cohorts which had crushed the rebellion in Campania were therefore, available to reinforce the limited forces which Vitellius had at his disposal in Rome. More importantly, at least in the short term, that very morning an attack launched by Cerialis on the north-eastern suburbs of Rome with 1000 cavalry had been repulsed, probably by Vitellius' Praetorians.¹⁴³

These victories not only increased the morale of the Vitellians generally but, as far as the defeat of the Flavian force at the Colline Gate was concerned, confirmed the Praetorians' suspicions that Sabinus had colluded with Petilius Cerialis and was, despite his protestations to the contrary, a flagrant coupist.

Vitellius, only too aware of his inability to control his by now frenzied and officerless Praetorians, advised Martialis to leave the palace secretly to avoid being killed by the Praetorians as

'internuntius invisae pacis'.¹⁴⁴ No sooner had Martialis returned to the Capitol than the initial assault on the Flavians was launched by the cavalry component of at least some of the 3 Praetorian

cohorts.¹⁴⁵ The outcome was hardly in doubt. The Flavians were crushed. Sabinus, numbed by the extent of the catastrophe which his actions /

actions had provoked, was arrested¹⁴⁶ and led in chains to Vitellius whose impotence in this situation was most clearly signalled by his inability to save the prefect. He was stabbed, possibly by a Praetorian, and hacked to death by the mob. His head was cut off and the decapitated body dragged to the Gemonian steps.¹⁴⁷ It was murder and was not to be forgiven.

The Praetorians now prepared to meet the assault which they knew that they must face from the main Flavian force under Antonius Primus.

The people, more excitable than loyal, demanded weapons. These they were given together with their emperor's blessing and the vaguest of instructions.¹⁴⁸ From such levies little could be expected.

Vitellius' hopes, such as they were, lay elsewhere. Representatives of the Senate were sent to try to negotiate with Primus. So too were the Vestals. But the time for compromise was past, as dead as Vespasian's brother. The priestesses were listened to, then dismissed with honour. Other delegates were handled more roughly, especially by Petilius Cerialis' troops.¹⁴⁹ Honour demanded that their humiliation by the Praetorians on the previous day be avenged. Rome was to be spared nothing.

The Flavian attack, in three columns, on the 20th encountered sturdy resistance. But the advance was relentless.¹⁵⁰ The most bitter fighting occurred at the Praetorian camp where the Vitellians, outnumbered and without hope, fought determinedly from the battlements and towers until, after the gates had been broken down by the Flavians, professional pride demanded a final, suicidal charge.¹⁵¹
Their /

Their emperor, irresolute to the last, died with less honour.¹⁵²

The victory of the Flavians, signalled by the salutation of Domitian as Caesar, brought the fighting to an end.¹⁵³ The 6 remaining cohorts of Vitellius' Praetorians surrendered, bitterly and reluctantly, at Bovillae, ten miles south of Rome.¹⁵⁴

Antonius Primus appointed the popular Arrius Varus as Praetorian prefect but, realising the extent of the problem, preferred to postpone any general reorganisation of the Guard until Mucianus arrived in Rome.¹⁵⁵

There were two main difficulties to be overcome. Firstly, the Praetorian Guard was seriously over-subscribed. Many of the Praetorians of Vitellius, who, even allowing for desertions and casualties, may have numbered well over 10,000 men, were unwilling to give up their membership of this corps. Those Othonians, who had fought with Primus at Bedriacum¹⁵⁶ and had taken part in the storming of the Praetorian camp,¹⁵⁷ had been drawn to Vespasian's cause partly by the prospect of reinstatement.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, those promises of transfer to the Praetorian Guard which had been made, or half-made, to a number of legionaries in the Flavian armies could not easily be overlooked.¹⁵⁹ Secondly, quite apart from the actual number of soldiers, it was clear that the loyalty of many Vitellians was, at best, questionable and that a purge of suspect elements was both essential and urgent.¹⁶⁰

Mucianus' first attempt, however, in a selection ceremony at the Praetorian /

Praetorian camp, to dismiss those Vitellians who had been captured in Rome or had surrendered at Bovillae provoked such an uproar that he thought it expedient to postpone the process.¹⁶¹ A few days later Domitian addressed this same group of Vitellians and offered land to any who withdrew from the Guard. There were few takers. The leaders of the Flavian party took a realistic view of this rejection and accepted all applicants. Honourable discharges, however, were granted to those who had completed their full term of service. Those of the others who failed to appreciate the limits of Flavian generosity were weeded out later on an individual basis as pretexts arose.¹⁶²

The new Praetorian Guard, an amalgam of Othonians, Vitellians and Flavians, became, as Mucianus hoped, soldiers 'eiusdem sacramenti, eiusdem imperatoris'.¹⁶³ To emphasise that the days of factionalism were at an end and to stress the regard in which the Praetorians were held they were given as prefects, firstly, Arrecinus Clemens, related to the new emperor by marriage,¹⁶⁴ and later, Titus, Vespasian's son and heir.¹⁶⁵

It would be wrong, however, to assume that the function of the Praetorian Guard changed under the Flavians. The Praetorians were used, as they had been from their inception, to suppress ruthlessly political dissent. That the rewards for such loyalty were less excessive than in the past was probably a reflection of Vespasian's belief in the virtues of frugality and of strong discipline.¹⁶⁶ Under his firm hand any pretensions which the Praetorians might have had /

had to a greater role within the state were firmly controlled.

But these men had in eighteen months made and unmade four emperors. They had seized the opportunities offered to them and had defended ferociously what they had gained. The taste of power had been sweet. But costly. Their defeats had been chastening and the subsequent humiliations mortifying. But humility had never been a Praetorian virtue. The old arrogance was never far from the surface. There would be other emperors needing Praetorian support and willing to pay for it. And the price would, as ever, be high.

CHAPTER VII

THE PRAETORIAN GUARD AS A POLITICAL FORCE

The Praetorians have not enjoyed a good history. They are conventionally portrayed as vicious, venal and riotous, every ready to intervene in politics and matters of state when they perceive their interests to be threatened, or even when their fancy dictates.¹ In 18th century Austria it was the proud boast of the Hapsburgs that the strength of the monarchy meant that there were 'no Mamelukes, no Praetorians, no Janissaries.'² The chancellor of Prussia, Hardenberg, when threatened in 1815 by officers opposed to the mild peace demands of Frederick William III, could write that he felt himself 'in the midst of Praetorian bands'.³ Lachouque, the biographer of Napoleon's Garde Impériale, after describing how the 'Grenadiers of the National Representatives', a unit founded in 1794 to guard the Convention, became contaminated by politics and lost its discipline, damns it as 'a veritable Praetorian Guard'.⁴ Historians of more recent events have hardly been kinder. The Praetorians have regularly been compared to, or even held to have been the inspiration of such a notorious and ideologically-motivated militia as the Nazi S.S..⁵

In all of this we may detect two separate indictments against the Guard. The first is that it was ill-disciplined and insubordinate. There is an element of truth in such a charge. Certainly we have examples of disorderly behaviour by the Praetorians. They rioted after Seianus was executed.⁶ Chaerea's cohort went on the rampage following Gaius' assassination.⁷ Otho's Praetorians appear to have acted at times very much as they wished without reference to their tribunes or centurions.⁸ But we must be careful not to allow the scandalous /

scandalous to beguile us or the exceptional to mislead us. Very occasionally the conduct of the Praetorian Guard may have been poorer than that expected of an Imperial Guard. One hundred years of devoted and effective service should not, however, be defamed because of a few isolated incidents. Throughout most of the Julio-Claudian period the Guard displayed exemplary conduct and maintained standards of discipline reflecting those of the Roman army of which it was an integral part.

As to the more important accusation that the Praetorians were in some sense political soldiers, it is clear that they were regarded by the Julio-Claudians as not only their personal protectors but the power-base of the imperial court and the tool of the emperor and his advisers. Although this aspect of their duties evolved as the principate itself became increasingly despotic and coercive, we would be wise to be wary either of overstating the pace of this development or of making simplistic assumptions as to its importance in our understanding of the nature of the principate. Political terror is, in every age, the inevitable concomitant of tyranny. Only the degree to which that terror is imposed varies, since it is dependent on the level of control desired by the ruler and the extent to which he feels it wise to tolerate dissent. Political intimidation, for example, has a timeless quality that requires no ideological commitment from its perpetrators. Tacitus provides us with an example from the principate of Nero. During the prosecution of Thrasea Paetus in AD. 66 armed Praetorians successfully inspired fear among the members of the Senate as they entered the temple of Venus Genetrix to debate the issue.⁹ Over 100 years earlier, in 43 BC., the law providing for /

for the Triumvirate was passed by a public assembly surrounded by the Praetorian cohorts of Octavian, Antony and Lepidus.¹⁰ The similarity is obvious - and instructive. Although such measures may be considered political acts, there is no evidence which might entitle us to describe those who carry them out as politically motivated. The soldiers of Octavian obey orders; likewise Nero's cohorts. The nature of the commands is only of relative importance. The execution of a distinguished senator is as willingly undertaken as the dispersal of a hostile crowd. Unquestioning obedience rather than political commitment was the drumbeat to which the Praetorians marched.

It is important, moreover, to avoid giving the impression that Rome, or indeed Italy, was, under the Julio-Claudians a police state held in subjugation by an all-pervading Praetorian terror. Such a notion is as risible as it is misleading. The establishment, at the end of the 1st century AD., of frumentarii, based in the castra peregrina, provided Rome with a political police of sorts.¹¹ But it was not until the great civil wars between AD. 193 and 197, when a proliferation of deserters and robbers had brought about a rapid deterioration in the socio-economic base in Italy, that the activities of imperial spies and military police intensified.¹²

It may also be worthwhile to consider why the Praetorians are given such prominence in our sources, especially Tacitus. The obvious answer, of course, is because they were the largest military unit in the vicinity of Rome and because they were used by the Julio-Claudian emperors for non-military, political purposes. But is it not also possible /

possible that the power of the Praetorians was exaggerated by Tacitus because it provided an alibi for the senatorial class. If the Praetorians had really been the emperor's Gestapo, if they really had the power to threaten or execute without reference to any authority other than the emperor and, on occasions, not even to him, then obviously to criticise the emperor's behaviour or disapprove publicly of his crimes would have been little more than suicide. Tacitus writes candidly of his own ambiguous position under Domitian¹³ and, although it is easy to understand his outrage at those like the Praetorians whom he believed conspired in degradation of the Senate, it is equally easy to appreciate his sense of relief at the availability of the concept of a tyranny supported by Praetorian strength which provided him with a small loophole for escape from a past with which he was unable to come to terms. The creation of such a myth meant that the absence of any serious senatorial resistance could be excused by alluding to the overwhelming and highly visible strength of the Guard.

I am aware how oddly the suggestion that Tacitus uses the Praetorians as a shield to protect the reputation of the Senate must ring when we remember how vehement is his condemnation of senatorial compliance in the *Annals* and *Agricola*.¹⁴ But the Senate was, undeniably, for the most part acquiescent and servile, and Tacitus is too honest a historian to pervert a manifest truth. I would argue, however, that, through the selectivity of his reporting, he focuses the spotlight of history rather too brightly on, as he perceives it, the ruthless eradication of senatorial liberty during the principate and, rather more directly, on the Praetorian Guard as the main agent of such measures.

It /

It would be unwise to attempt to deny that Praetorian involvement in the suppression of political dissent did increase, especially during the principates of emperors like Gaius and Nero who adopted a monarchico-absolutist position in contrast to the aristocratic principate envisaged by Augustus and Tiberius.¹⁵ But there are, I believe, in this regard two factors worthy of serious consideration. Firstly, there are few grounds for suggesting that the Praetorians participated in the suppression of dissident opinion to a substantially greater degree in the last years of Nero's principate than they did during the first years of Augustus'. Such tasks were ever within the province of the Praetorians. Secondly, the Praetorians themselves do not seem to have sought to increase their involvement in such activities. Indeed, their unwillingness to prevent Seianus' fall in AD. 31 could be interpreted as indicating both a desire to maintain their traditional role as the emperor's bodyguard and a distaste for their prefect's political ambitions.¹⁶

How does such a notion of Praetorian disinterest in the political enmities of their emperors square with their role in both the accession of Claudius and the deposition of Nero? Does not their behaviour on these occasions presume a keen political awareness and a commitment to the concept of the principate? While the actions of the Praetorians in AD. 41 might support such a thesis, their abandonment in AD. 68 of a populist like Nero in favour of the aristocratic Galba would seem to suggest that expediency was the principal factor in prompting the Guard to intervene in the political process. Was self-interest, then, the dominant stimulus of Praetorian fidelity? Perhaps, in truth, they /

they had little choice but to elevate Claudius whose tenure of the principate at least guaranteed their future employment. The alternative of senatorial control and censure held no appeal. But it was the promise of a donative of 15000 sesterces per man which secured their loyalty.¹⁷ Likewise in AD. 68 the prospect of being isolated in preserving in power an emperor who had managed to alienate almost every section of the community, even those which had once enthusiastically supported him, may have induced the Praetorians to listen to their prefect's lies, but they would hardly have judged them believable had Nymphidius not cunningly and ruinously committed Galba to presenting 30,000 sesterces to each of the soldiers.¹⁸ Luck too seems to have played a part. If Gratus had not found Claudius hiding behind a curtain,¹⁹ would the Praetorians have acted so resolutely to crush the Senate's hopes of a restored Republic? If Nero had not been so quick in his despair to commit suicide,²⁰ would the Praetorians, despite their acclamations for Galba²¹ and the death-sentence of the Senate,²² really have abandoned Germanicus' grandson?

The soldier who misuses his position at the hub of power to extract extra rewards and privileges for himself may well be damned for acting greedily and selfishly. His behaviour can rightly be considered costly to the state in its immediate consequences and calamitous in the precedent it creates. But it tells us nothing of the political convictions of that soldier, either as to their nature or whether indeed they exist at all.

If neither their occasional meddling in politics nor their regular involvement /

involvement in internal security justify calling the Praetorians political soldiers, it is undoubtedly important at this stage to determine a definition of that term precise enough to exclude those who, under the motivation of non-political factors, commit political acts and yet sufficiently broad to avoid an overly rigid specification and to allow some licence in our interpretation of political consciousness. We must, therefore, try to focus our attention on the motive rather than the effect. Such an exercise is not without its difficulties. Quite apart from the dubious validity of drawing a distinction between the actor and the act, there is clearly inherent in this approach the danger of subjectivity. Yet while caution is advisable and essential, timidity should be eschewed. We must try, using the evidence both literary and epigraphic as our base, to build up a clearer picture of the Praetorians' political soul.

It is questionable, however, whether it is possible, given its structure, to assume that there existed within the Praetorian Guard any consensus of political opinion. The absence of such homogeneity can be held to reflect, and perhaps even originate from, the different terms of service of, on the one hand, the ordinary Praetorians²³ and, on the other, their centurions and tribunes. As far as the latter group is concerned, their advancement, from the principate of Claudius onwards, by promotion through the three corps of the garrison of Rome - from the Vigiles to the urban cohorts and finally to the Praetorian Guard - is not only common, but regular to the point of inflexibility.²⁴ Such systemised rotation,²⁵ involving tours of duty of perhaps one year in each post,²⁶ prevented the dangers of fraternisation²⁷ and provided a /

a breadth of experience, demanding and necessary, for those who aspired to higher posts such as procuratorships.²⁸

It was to this group of men, ambitious for themselves and their descendants, that Otho held out the prospect of promotion to the Senate.²⁹ The exaggeration was shameless, prompted in large degree by his need on that occasion to win the support of his sorely-tried officers in order to convert the riotous Praetorians into a semblance of good order. Yet Otho's listeners were not starry-eyed recruits gullibly accepting a patent fiction and the expectation of such advancement was not illusory. Under the principate tenure of the primipilate, a necessary step in the cursus, automatically elevated the holder into the equestrian order. It was not unreasonable for the sons and grandsons of those who went from the primipilate to a tribunate in Rome to hope for admission to the Senate.³⁰ But the evidence suggests that such promotion was gradual and attainable over several generations rather than in one lifetime.

Moreover, while it is clear that service either as a centurion or a tribune in the cohorts in Rome both presupposes the prior support of an influential friend at court and provided increased opportunities of future patronage from the Praetorian prefects, the imperial freedmen or even the emperor himself,³¹ it is difficult to accept Durry's thesis that there existed 'une classe inconnue' of 'equestrian-praetorians' - men who won equestrian status as they rose through the cursus - who enjoyed preference over those who were knights by birth in the matter of procuratorships and the high prefectures.³² Although it is certainly /

certainly true that careers of this type occurred³³ and that Praetorians had a good chance of promotion once they had been chosen for the centurionate, it is a quantum leap to argue that men who began in the ranks of the Guard commanded such a clearly defined superiority in prospects of promotion.³⁴

A 'curriculum typique'³⁵ in Durry's view is that of M. Vettius Valens who began as a soldier in the 8th Praetorian cohort and rose through the centurionates and tribunates of the urban militias to end his career as imperial procurator in Lusitania.³⁶ But it is surely relevant that this man came from a respectable family in Arminium and was possibly related to the Vettius Valens who was Claudius' doctor.³⁷ Pompeius Longinus, the tribune in the Guard, who was roughly handled by Otho's supporters at the Praetorian camp during the coup against Galba, suffered not because of his rank - two other tribunes with him were merely detained by the guardsmen - but because he was a close friend of Galba.³⁸ We may plausibly attribute his military position to imperial favour. Individual patronage rather than collective privilege was the hallmark and basis of promotion within the Praetorian Guard.

Although it may be possible to interpret the upward mobility exemplified by the Praetorian officer corps as the result of a general policy by innately autocratic emperors to limit aristocratic power which they viewed as a threat to their supremacy,³⁹ it is clear that those promoted in this way did not see themselves as the nucleus of a revolutionary party or as part of a scheme to replace the old nobility. /

nobility. While Praetorian centurions and tribunes did not perhaps share the same social background,⁴⁰ they were united by a common outlook in matters political which was both conservative and bourgeois. And, as Hopkins notes 'there was no possibility of revolution based upon a professional bourgeoisie'.⁴¹ Assimilation into the upper class rather than its destruction is the aim of the upwardly mobile.

This is not to imply that the officers of the Guard were fundamentally or regularly disloyal to their emperors. The memories of the horrors of the civil wars were too vivid and the benefits of the peace which the principate had brought were too apparent to all sections of Roman society. More especially, the bestowal of honours and promotion was ultimately within the emperor's gift. Such privileges were not to be sacrificed lightly. It was when the delicately balanced relationship between the emperor and the aristocracy broke down that the fidelity of the Praetorian officers came under stress. When the aristocrats, through fear of disgrace or assassination, plotted against the emperor, or when the emperor, judging rebellion imminent, anticipated such conspiracies by executing aristocrats or confiscating their property, the centurions and tribunes of the Guard had to decide where in the final analysis their loyalties lay. It is only when we bear in mind this dilemma that we can understand the involvement of Cassius Chaerea, Cornelius Sabinus, Aquila and Lupus in the murder of Gaius,⁴² and of Subrius Flavus and Sulpicius Asper in the Pisonian conspiracy.⁴³

We should display similar caution in considering those factors which dictated /

dictated or influenced the political temper of the ordinary Praetorian guardsmen. If we examine their origins, it is clear that some were from a bourgeois background.⁴⁴ We know of a recruit from Noricum who belonged to a magistrate's family from Virunum.⁴⁵ Such men will have shared the ambitions and political opinions of their class. But Claudius' Guard also contained men from the tribe of the Anauni, attributed to Tridentum.⁴⁶

Just as diverse, one may suppose, were their reasons for enlisting. Durry writes 'je devine en eux, selon une règle permanente, des désœuvrés de petite ville qui voulaient voir la grande ou des pauvres de la campagne qui craignaient le travail pénible et ingrat de la terre'.⁴⁷ True, of course, but higher motives, family tradition for example, will sometimes have played a part.⁴⁸ What is certain, however, is that all those joining the Guard were aware, sometimes no doubt rather hazily, that not only were they becoming part of a corps whose pay and terms of service were exceedingly attractive, but that their membership of the Guard provided opportunities to win the favour of the rich and powerful and to gain a foothold on the ladder of social advancement.

We have dealt so far with the social origins of the Praetorians. Equally important is the birthplace of these soldiers.⁴⁹ Tacitus, with reference to AD. 23, tells us that the Praetorian cohorts were 'Etruria ferme Umbriaque delectae aut vetere Latio et coloniis antiquitus Romanis'.⁵⁰ Some have chosen to misinterpret this information to support their own simplistic view of the Roman army as /

as an organisation inflexibly and rigidly structured. So Durry:
 'la loi la plus générale est celle du parallélisme du recrutement
 de la garde avec celui des légions, qui nous fait assister à un
 glissement qui a quelque chose d'implacable. Quand les légions sont
 formées d'Italiens, les prétoriens sont romains; quand les légionnaires
 sont provinciaux, les prétoriens sont Italiens; quand les légionnaires
 sont des soldats des frontières, tout ensemble paysans et soldats,
 les prétoriens sont choisis dans les meilleures troupes de l'Empire'.⁵¹

The balance is polished and impressive, but quite misleading.

Continual difficulties in attracting recruits at this time⁵² ensured
 that, if a potential recruit was not unsuitable, then he was accepted.

This was one of the factors which led to a rise in the number of
 recruits from outside the areas mentioned by Tacitus. We have
 already noted the presence of the Anauni from north Italy in the
 Praetorian Guard during Claudius' principate. Likewise the Norican.
 We also know of two Narbonensians, one from Vienne, the other from
 Carpentorate,⁵³ and two Spaniards, one of whom, according to the elder
 Pliny, participated in a military operation in northeast Spain.⁵⁴
 Most intriguing of all the epigraphic evidence are the inscriptions
 of two Macedonians whose service was probably under Gaius.
 Although Macedonia was by this time a highly romanised province, it
 is notable that these two men did not come from a Roman veteran
 colony but as their fathers' names show, were native Macedonians and
 first-generation citizens from Heraclea Sintica.⁵⁵

But what does all of this tell us about the political instincts of the
 Praetorian /

Praetorian Guard? Very little, it must be admitted. We can state with some confidence that the origins, both social and geographical, of the guardsmen were less uniform and more varied than has sometimes been assumed. Moreover, the absence of any Praetorian stereotype would suggest that we should view with considerable caution the idea that the Praetorian Guard was used by the emperors as a vehicle to promote the social advancement of the Italian middle-class.⁵⁶

However the notion that the Praetorians were as heterogeneous in their political opinions as in their origins is contradicted by Tacitus' account of their behaviour during and after the coup against Galba in January of AD. 69. Here is apparently solid and authoritative evidence of class awareness. Not only did the Praetorians warn Otho not to trust their tribunes and centurions,⁵⁷ they actually killed some whom they suspected of disloyalty.⁵⁸ Furthermore, they were sufficiently well organised to undertake covert surveillance of the homes of certain rich senators who they believed were intriguing with their officers against the interests of the Othonian cause.⁵⁹

Are we to suppose then that within the Praetorian Guard there existed a movement as subversive and sectional as, for example, the Levellers were during Cromwell's Protectorate?⁶⁰ Before we could make such an assumption we would firstly have to find evidence of similar political feelings and alignments over a longer historical period. The year AD. 69 was clearly unique in many ways. Although the solidarity and commitment which characterise the Praetorians' involvement in the events of that year may be interpreted as the product of an awareness among the soldiers of class distinctions, it is equally possible to see /

see the origins of their actions in a sense of collective guilt resulting from their part in Galba's murder. In the latter case one may suppose that fear of a comprehensive retribution rather than a desire to change society was the Praetorians' motivation.

It is also evident that if the Praetorians had desired to be regarded as a real political force or even as a pressure group,⁶¹ then one might reasonably expect to find indications of some attempt on their part to develop a political creed and to expand it beyond the rather narrow confines of the Guard itself into Roman society in general and, more particularly, among the urban proletariat. Yet, apart from a pervasive lack of faith in their officers, there is no evidence of any grander Praetorian doctrine. As for political links with the masses of Rome, it is clear, even allowing for bias against the common people on the part of upper-class historians,⁶² that ideological considerations were not, in general, an influential or determining factor in the mobilisation of that social group.⁶³ Moreover, there is a substantial body of evidence which suggests that a considerable degree of mutual antipathy existed between the people of Rome and the urban militia. Whether acting to control disorder in the theatre⁶⁴ or dispersing a mob which wished to protest at some unpopular political decision or administrative failure,⁶⁵ the Praetorian Guard was undoubtedly viewed by the urban plebs as an essentially oppressive force. The suspicions which the people felt can be judged from the speed with which they blamed the soldiers as they reacted to a rumour during Claudius' principate that the emperor had been murdered on his way to Ostia.⁶⁶ Although we have proof, natural and expected, of former /

former members of the Guard settling in Rome,⁶⁷ it is quite evident that there was no common ground between the plebs and the Guard beyond a selfish desire to obtain for themselves the maximum, both in terms of money and privileges, which the state could afford.

The Praetorian Guard was clearly not a party militia of the type to which Hitler's SS, Mussolini's MVSN, and even Saddam's Republican Guard belong. In vain does one search for any hint of a populist philosophy among the Praetorians. It is impossible to detect a consistent ideological motive for joining or any attempt to impose a political orthodoxy during service. In truth, the Praetorians were not really interested in the political manoeuvrings of the emperor and his court except where their privileges were affected. Praetorian approbation was accorded to an emperor not on the basis of his political programme but rather on the size of the donative which he offered them. The Guard was, in political terms, essentially a reactive force. Lust for power was the concern and prerogative of the rich and ambitious. To the Praetorians, another country. They took what timorous emperors offered and demanded what a treacherous prefect promised. Nothing suggests that they sought more than this.

Augustus gave an unambiguous message as to his view of the nature of the relationship between the princeps and his soldiers when, in the aftermath of the civil wars, he dropped the salutation 'comrades' when addressing his troops.⁶⁸ The revolution was over. Actium removed the need for any further nods towards populism. It was time for traditional, more hierarchial values to reassert themselves.⁶⁹

Under /

Under the direction of Seianus the Guard as a whole gained a much higher profile than Augustus had allowed it, and it is hardly overstating the case to suggest that it developed at this time into a more autonomous power-base. Thereafter the history of the Praetorians varied according to the degree of control imposed by the emperor and his advisers, and according to the personalities and ambitions of the individuals concerned. Nevertheless, it is a manifest truth that throughout the entire Julio-Claudian period we find, if we can turn aside from the more sensational and well-known episodes, a fine record of service and loyalty.

THE PRAETORIAN GUARD AS A MILITARY FORCE

Passerini insists, despite the evidence, that the main importance of the cohorts was military, not political. 'I pretoriani costituirono una originale, poderosa formazione bellica, e la milizia piu efficiente e gloriosa dell' armata imperiale'.¹ While such a description might reasonably be applied to, for example, Napoleon's Garde Impériale, the arguments for its application to the Praetorian Guard are, especially under the Julio-Claudians, less than compelling.² Although it is certainly true that, from the time of the Flavians, the Praetorians were utilised rather more often as a combat unit, there is no evidence to suggest that, even at this time, their role was to spearhead the assault or try out new military tactics. Indeed Augustus and his successors deliberately avoided drafting select men from the frontiers to serve in Rome - the one method of recruitment by which the Praetorians might justifiably have been considered as the cream and, at the same time, a microcosm of the Roman army.

But the military dimension cannot yet be dismissed. Another role is suggested: the Praetorians were a 'corps for the defence of Rome and Italy'³ - a sort of strategic reserve if things went wrong on the frontiers. This is a patent falsehood, easily exposed. It is evident that the concept of such a reserve was quite alien to the Romans of that period and out of tune with Augustus' general military policy which acknowledged the primacy of the legions in the defence of the empire.⁴ There are also several practical reasons why we should reject this notion. Firstly, there were in Augustus' time under 5000 men in the Praetorian corps. There were hardly more than /

than 6000 at any time during the Julio-Claudian period. If we allow for the other duties which they had to perform, it is scarcely credible that such a small number of men would have been sufficient to provide a defence for Italy in the event of an attack by an external enemy. When such a threat did arise in AD. 6 in Pannonia and Dalmatia and again in AD. 9 after Varus' defeat in the Teutoburger Wald, Augustus was allegedly, in one case, forced to raise an army made up in part of ex-slaves whose freedom he had bought⁵ and, in the other, to compel reluctant young men of military age to draw lots to see who should serve in the legions.⁶ So, from a purely numerical point of view, it is not feasible to regard the Praetorians as a strategic reserve. Besides, the Praetorians, based as they were in or near Rome, were in the wrong position to act as a reserve for the troubled areas of the Rhine-Danube line, Dalmatia and Pannonia, or north-west Spain. If they really were a reserve, then, surely they would have been largely based in the north of Italy where they could have controlled the Alpine passes and provided timely help to any hard-pressed army. Dessau believed that there were 3 Praetorian cohorts at Rome, 3 at Aquileia, and another 3 at an unidentified town in the north of Italy.⁷ It would be quite wrong to write off Aquileia as a possible station for the Praetorians. We have 20 or more Praetorian inscriptions from there of Augustan date, but only one or two from Rome. From the epigraphic evidence alone we would conclude that most of the Praetorians were based at Aquileia, and only a few in the capital city. I would prefer, however, to follow Suetonius who is quite clear; Augustus kept 3 cohorts 'in urbe' and the rest 'circa finitima oppida'.⁸

If the common soldier in the legions was envious of his Praetorian counterpart, it was only because of the latter's pay and privileges, not because he regarded them as in any way militarily superior.⁹

Indeed misgivings are frequently expressed in our sources over the Praetorians' ability to endure the hardships of actual campaigning. Tacitus, referring to the situation in AD. 69, specifically states that it was unusual for the Praetorians to take the field¹⁰ and comments on the adverse reaction of the Praetorians to the hardships of campaigning.¹¹ Plutarch too mentions the disorderly and arrogant spirit of Otho's Praetorians and, probably reflecting the general opinion as to their fighting ability, writes -

'They were soft, owing to their lack of employment and their unwarlike mode of life, having spent most of their time at spectacles and festivals and plays, and they wished to cloak their weakness with insolence and boasting, disdaining to perform the services laid upon them because they were above the work, not because they were unable to do it'.¹²

These are clearly failings which we would expect to find in public duties and internal security troops concerned with policing rather than in an elite formation of soldiers.¹³

But some caution is needed here. Many of the legions, although based on the frontiers, had very limited experience of combat between 31 BC. and AD. 69. Furthermore the actual performance of the Praetorians on the battlefield on Otho's behalf was, although characterised /

characterised by malignant indiscipline, in no way disgraceful or unworthy. Yet it is very difficult to argue that our sources do not mean exactly what they say. We have, I think, no choice but to accept that, leaving aside the special circumstances of AD. 69, the Praetorians appeared on the battlefield only as a bodyguard accompanying their emperor or an important member of the imperial family when they went campaigning.¹⁴

To summarise, the Praetorians began as an elite force, but ceased to be so at quite an early date, possibly after Actium, perhaps even earlier. Although the tribunes were always very experienced soldiers who must have attempted to train the Praetorians properly, the Guard itself, recruited directly from the civil population, quickly evolved from its original role as a specialised military unit into a political instrument whose main purpose was to guarantee the stability of the principate.¹⁵

CHAPTER IX

PREFECTS AND PREFECTURE

Although the principal concern of this thesis is to assess the political commitment of the Praetorian cohorts, the work would be deficient if it failed to consider both the role of the Praetorian prefects and the development of the prefecture. The latter especially has been less thoroughly treated than its importance merits.¹

It is apparent that from quite early on, the praefectus praetorio was more than just a commander of the Praetorian Guard. Once appointed, he became part of the emperor's consilium with not only formal responsibilities but also much informal contact with the emperor. But a further truth deserves to be acknowledged - that the prefecture was not merely a succession of prefects but was, from its inception, an office of great potentiality. The ambitious were quick to appreciate this. Seianus, alert to his own advantage, sought the prefecture. In turn, the enormous range of responsibilities undertaken by that prefect had an immense effect on the manner in which his successors viewed their duties.

We can learn much about the nature of the post from a consideration of its origins. It was no sinecure, designed to bestow a hollow honour upon an imperial favourite. On the contrary, Augustus did not appoint prefects for his Guard until 2 BC.² The date is revealing. In that year occurred the exile of Julia and the execution of Iullus Antonius.³ Whether they were genuine conspirators or the victims of court politics is unimportant. The effect /

effect of the scandal was traumatic. The confidence of the ageing princeps was shaken, the security of the regime compromised. The plot as much as its suppression will have been noted. An initiative was needed, to restore confidence in the regime, and to ensure that personal frailty was not mistaken for public weakness. And so an innovation, momentous but fraught with potential dangers. The creation of the prefecture established a barrier and lengthened the line of authority between the emperor and his Guard. We have already noted the paramount importance which Augustus attached to his personal contacts with the people.⁴ He cannot have relished an institution capable of impeding and undermining his direct links with such a vital body of troops.⁵ Hence a precaution, one of several. The first pair of prefects was hardly notable⁶ and, as such, wholly dependent upon and loyal to the emperor, the bestower of power. But the distinction of the post could not be hidden. A prefect, otherwise unknown, attained conspicuous honours.⁷ The prospect of imperial favour and of the concomitant rewards made the office alluring and attractive even to the highest within the equestrian order.⁸

Although Augustus had, by the creation of the prefecture, yielded many of the practical aspects of directing the Praetorian cohorts to his prefects, he retained titular command of the Guard and regarded the prefects as no more than his lieutenants.⁹ Wherever possible, the direct links between emperor and Guard were maintained. We know, for example, that it was the emperor himself who gave the watchword to the tribune of the cohort on guard at the palace.¹⁰

High was the penalty paid by the emperor who failed to appreciate the importance of such symbolism.¹¹

The desire of the emperor to emphasise the closeness of his personal attachment to the Guard can also be seen in Claudius' declaration on the status of the Anauni¹² and, more generally, in the terminology used in the diplomas granting the right of marriage to Praetorian veterans.¹³ The force is quite clear; the emperor's Guard, the emperor's dispensation. Strikingly absent is any mention of the prefects. But such an omission is hardly unexpected. Practical necessity may have demanded the existence of the prefecture, but the emperor's most vital interests dictated that his own role as commander of the Praetorian corps should not be thereby diminished either in the eyes of the soldiers or the wider public.

Although at a later date Praetorian prefects may possibly have been appointed for life¹⁴ and were allegedly free from the threat of dismissal,¹⁵ such privileges were certainly not accorded to those of the Julio-Claudian period. Of all the prefects between 2 BC. and AD. 68 whose names and fates are known to us, Sextus Afranius Burrus is the only one who died of natural causes while in office.¹⁶ Of the rest seven were executed either during or shortly after their tenure of the prefecture.¹⁷ Such evidence must lead us to two main conclusions, firstly, the power of the emperor during the period in question remained supreme and absolute; and secondly, the increased powers of the prefecture, though freely granted by a succession of emperors, were mirrored, almost contradictorily, by a rise in the level /

level of suspicion, whether justified or not, which those same emperors felt towards their prefects.

Before examining the office itself and the reasons why so many powers were devolved to it, some consideration may appropriately be given to the basis on which appointments to the prefecture were made. Firstly, a firm rejection. Severus Alexander, who became emperor in AD. 222, may have allowed the Senate the right of veto over his choice of Praetorian prefects.¹⁸ Nothing, however, suggests that the prospect of senatorial disapproval in this area had any weight during the Julio-Claudian era, even among those emperors, like Augustus and Tiberius who claimed that they wished to encourage the involvement of their aristocratic peers in the process of government. Whatever the truth of such professions, the appointment of Praetorian prefects was, throughout the period, most distinctly the personal prerogative of the emperor.

But what factors did influence the emperor in his choice of prefects? Syme wanders dangerously into the sphere of psychology in his suggestions as to Tiberius' motives in appointing Seianus.¹⁹ Even here, however, an evident truth emerges. Personal influence with the emperor was a pre-requisite for prospective prefects of the Guard. Seianus is an obvious example. But there were others too. Would a Narbonensian have attained the Praetorian prefecture, had he not served as procurator to three generations of the imperial family and enjoyed the confidence of an emperor's wife?²⁰ Would the son of a nurse have been nominated as Praetorian prefect, if his mother had not been the wet-nurse /

wet-nurse of a future emperor?²¹ Would a convicted adulterer, reduced to fishing for a living, have contributed to the fall of a dynasty had he not shared an emperor's interest in the business of breeding horses?²² Would a provincial assessor, arrogant, indolent and fatally addicted to intrigue, have become prefect of the Guard, if he had not enthusiastically espoused the cause of his aged governor?²³

But there is more. Proven competence and administrative ability were also required. The willingness of the imperial family to entrust the running of their estates to Burrus over a long period suggests that his organisational capabilities matched his interpersonal skills. Faenius Rufus may have become prefect of the corn supply through the partisanship of Agrippina, but it was his scrupulous honesty and manifest success in that post which won him the Praetorian prefecture.²⁴ Even blackguards like Macro and Tigellinus had commanded the Vigiles, without conspicuous failure, before rising to the prefecture of the Guard.²⁵

It would, therefore, be quite wrong to imply that the sole determinant in the selection of Praetorian prefects was imperial favour.²⁶ It was undeniably the major influence, with the possible exceptions of AD. 41, when the manner in which the prefects were chosen after Gaius' assassination is unclear, and of AD. 69, when Tacitus tells us that Otho allowed the Praetorians to select their own prefects.²⁷ But the emperor's choice was rarely uninformed. Talent clearly had its role. No emperor could afford to have an incompetent in charge of his Guard. It seems, therefore, reasonable to assume that, in most cases, it was a prefect's ability which initially attracted the interest of the

emperor /

emperor and this in turn led to subsequent promotion.

As for the prefecture itself, it is evident that Augustus did not, in 2 BC., foresee that it would develop in the way that it did, nor did he intend that it should acquire a range of powers only slightly inferior to those held by the emperor. On the other hand, Stein is at least partly correct in his premise that Augustus envisaged the contribution of the Praetorian prefects as rather more than might be expected from commanders of the Guard. Whether this, as he suggests, is implicit in the title - *praefectus praetorio* - must be considered more doubtful.²⁸ Moreover he appears to misunderstand in the most fundamental way the nature of the prefecture in that he does not appreciate that it was Augustus' failure to define precisely the duties of the office which gave it its greatest strength and permitted its subsequent development. What was important in 2 BC. was not the power of the prefecture but its potential to acquire power.

De Laet is forceful in his rejection of Stein's thesis,²⁹ but his own explanation is, I believe, deeply flawed in several important aspects. He notes two instances in which Tacitus does not use his normal term - *praefectus praetorio* - for the Praetorian prefect and argues that these exceptions - in one of which Seius Strabo is referred to as *praetoriarum cohortium praefectus*, while in the other Seianus is called *cohortibus praetoriis praefectus* - are deliberate and indicative of the historian's wish to show that Strabo and Seianus, at least at the beginning of his tenure of the prefecture, were solely commanders of the Guard.³⁰

There /

There are, it seems to me, two points which require elaboration.

Firstly, De Laet, like Stein, attaches undue importance to the title.

I would dispute whether such weight should be given to Tacitus'

terminology and would oppose the suggestion that the title of the

office was directly related to the growth in the number of its

functions.³¹ Would it not be preferable to regard praefectus praetorio

and praetoriarum cohortium praefectus as synonymous and interchangeable,

with the former the more common usage?³² Secondly, although I like

De Laet's view of the prefecture as a developing institution better

than Stein's more rigid analysis, I would challenge vigorously his

attempt to limit the initial responsibilities of the prefects to the

control of the Guard. It is clear that from the inception of the

prefecture the prefects not only commanded the Praetorian cohorts but,

more momentously, assumed sole responsibility within the imperial

circle for the direction of force and undertook at a more general level

the supervision of all aspects of the emperor's security.

If then we seek reasons for the extension in the powers associated

with the prefecture, part of the answer, at least, must lie in the

intrinsic flexibility of the post which distinguished it from those

other offices of state instituted by Augustus.³³ The prefectures of

the Vigiles and the corn supply were established to carry out specific

tasks - to prevent Rome from burning down³⁴ and its people from

starving.³⁵ But the concept of security - the province of the Praetorian

prefecture - is much harder to define. Is it limited to remaining

vigilant and protecting the ruler from an assassin's attack? Or does

it necessitate a more aggressive posture involving the detection and

suppression /

suppression of plots before they can properly develop? Or, again, can we go further and equate security with the elimination of those elements within society which are considered to be hostile to or threaten the state? If no clear definition is provided and no firm limits set, then the expectation must be that a security apparatus will continue to seek new roles and attract new functions until it attains a dominating position in the structure of power. When, therefore, we consider these factors against the background of growing absolutism and autocracy which characterise the progression of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, we can hardly be surprised that the Praetorian prefecture acquired a range of responsibilities encompassing not only all matters relating to the emperor's security but also involving it in judicial, administrative and military spheres of activity.

But flexibility can scarcely be the whole explanation. The operation of the post too facilitated its enhancement. The appointment presumed loyalty - a sound bedrock from which expansion might readily develop. But a greater influence still was the daily contact between emperor and prefect.³⁶ Although it is unclear whether the prefect was constantly at the emperor's side,³⁷ such contact was not limited to that part of the day given over to official business. The evidence suggests that it may well have been usual for the prefect to dine with the emperor. Seianus saved Tiberius' life in AD. 26 when the roof of a cavern at a villa named Speluncae fell on them while they were dining.³⁸ It was during a dinner party that Burrus was dismissed from the prefecture by a drunken Nero.³⁹ Tigellinus was a predictable participant /

participant in Nero's orgies⁴⁰ and gave Sporus away during Nero's 'wedding' in Greece in AD. 67.⁴¹ Otho's prefects were at the dinner party broken up by a Praetorian riot.⁴² From association came familiarity, even friendship. Macrobius paints us a vivid picture of Augustus and Seius Strabo discussing political philosophy.⁴³ And so compatability combined with convenience, and intimacy with proximity to ensure a continual increase in the competence of the prefecture.

It seems probable that the Praetorian prefect, as the official responsible for the emperor's security, was, from a very early date, a member of the consilium which the emperor used both as a consultative body and a court of law.⁴⁴ Suetonius tells us that Augustus set up a series of consilia drawn by lot from members of the Senate and serving for six months, but says nothing about whether the Praetorian prefect was a member.⁴⁵ However, the same author specifically mentions Seianus as one of a number of consiliarii murdered by Tiberius.⁴⁶ Although this, by itself, is hardly sufficient to enable us to claim that the Praetorian prefect was always a member of the consilium, a better source provides confirmation. Tacitus reports that Burrus, accused together with Pallas of sponsoring a rival to Nero in AD. 55, was present as an assessor at his own trial.⁴⁷ Although this is probably a distortion, it is explicable if Burrus was a regular member of Nero's consilium. Indeed it is not unreasonable to assume that the prefect may have served on the consilium during Pallas' trial or when the accuser was tried later for calumnia.

The juridical involvement of the prefect was not, however, limited to membership /

membership of the emperor's consilium. Seneca describes Nero's reluctance to sign a death warrant presented to him by Burrus.⁴⁸

The clear implication is that by this time the Praetorian prefect had a firm foothold in the administration of justice. De Laet tries to date the development of this function to the principate of Tiberius.⁴⁹

The vigour of Seianus, well-attested, lends credence to such a suggestion. And indeed this approach, as I have previously noted, does contain an element of truth. The scope of the prefecture undeniably changed during the tenure of that most ambitious prefect. But I would suggest that this wider juridical function should be regarded not solely as the product of one prefect's ambition but rather as an enhancement of the basic role of the prefect as the guardian of the emperor and commander of the Praetorian cohorts.⁵⁰

The path of this progression runs thus. The prefect, as the emperor's protector, was entrusted with the responsibility for the arrest of alleged offenders of a certain distinction. So we find Claudius' prefect Rufrius Crispinus personally leading the unit to apprehend Valerius Asiaticus at Baiae in AD. 47.⁵¹ The place of custody for prominenti, among whom we can include Herod Agrippa⁵² and the apostle Paul,⁵³ was often the Praetorian camp. None of this is, of course, in any way surprising. The preventive detention of those who threaten, or are alleged to threaten, the security of the state is indisputably the function of those who are charged with maintaining that same security. But the prefect's involvement was not limited to the detention of suspects. He also appears to have been responsible for the gathering of evidence and the examination of witnesses. Since this involved torture /

torture which was, especially in the case of slaves, an accepted, indeed intrinsic, part of the process of interrogation, it was not an exercise for the fastidious. Tacitus gives us corrupt and brutal monsters - Macro in the aftermath of Seianus' execution⁵⁴ and Tigellinus at the brutal questioning of Pythias, Octavia's maid, in AD. 62⁵⁵ and Epicharis during the Pisonian conspiracy three years later.⁵⁶ We should not be misled. This was not a divertissement for the sadistic. From the particular we may assume a more general principle - that it was, in certain cases, the recognised duty of the Praetorian prefect to conduct the interrogation.

But we must not take our assumptions too far. Burrus' role as Nero's assessor is significant. But it foreshadows only dimly the independent jurisdiction of Hadrian's prefect Marcius Turbo.⁵⁷

Likewise, the personal involvement of the prefect in the arresting and questioning of suspects, and even in the presenting of evidence to the Senate or emperor, although considerable extensions of his original role, scarcely explain the enormous civil powers which the prefecture had acquired by the early 3rd century.⁵⁸ We may, therefore, rightly

conclude that the prefect's juridical role was gradually developing throughout the Julio-Claudian period and that the foundations of its later growth were firmly laid at this time. Nothing in the evidence indicates that we can further extend our conclusions.

Moreover, although it may be possible to comprehend the impetus behind this development and to see it in the context of the general increase in the duties of the prefect, the precise manner and timing of such changes remain a matter of speculation.⁵⁹

The enhancement of the prefecture was not limited to legal administration. By the end of the 2nd century Perennis was acting as chief of staff to the entire Roman army and was directing the appointments of legionary commanders.⁶⁰ It may rightly be argued that the powers which Commodus granted to his prefect were exceptional, but the appointment of the Praetorian prefect to the command of a field army was not an innovation on his part but rather the continuation of a regular practice of Marcus Aurelius.⁶¹ Even closer to the Julio-Claudian period, Cornelius Fuscus, who attained the prefecture under Domitian, commanded an expeditionary force to Dacia in AD. 88.⁶² It would, however, be quite wrong to assume that the prefecture acquired a permanent military competence beyond the direction of the Praetorian cohorts from the principate of Domitian. It is at least partly correct to regard these appointments as special delegations to individual prefects.⁶³ On the other hand it must be admitted that the distinction between a special delegation, regularly granted, and a permanent competence is a thin one and perhaps more apparent in retrospect than it was at the time.

A different interpretation also suggests itself. Is it not possible to regard the practice of placing the prefect at the head of a field army as a natural extension of his role as the emperor's security adviser? We have already noted the presumption of loyalty implicit both in the appointment to and operation of the prefecture. To whom, therefore, could the emperor more reliably turn in times of crisis than to his most trusted subordinate? But fidelity alone hardly explains the imposition of the Praetorian prefect as a commander of field /

field armies. Another factor merits consideration. The maintenance of the security of the empire's borders was seen as the personal responsibility of the emperor himself. Augustus' anguish on hearing of the slaughter of Varus' legions in the Teutoburg Forest was prompted, to some extent, by the loss which the disaster caused to his own prestige.⁶⁴ After Augustus the level of autocracy increased. So too did its concomitant vices, especially vanity. No-one was more receptive to imperial propaganda, or more gullibly deceived by it, than the emperors themselves. Louis the XIVth was neither the first nor last despot to be beguiled by the cult of personality which he himself had created.⁶⁵ And so a threat to the stability of the state, whether from an internal or external source, was viewed as an assault on the dignity of the emperor and, in the final analysis, a possible menace to his survival. In what better way then could the emperor express his personal concern and determination to counter such a challenge than by despatching the commander of his own bodyguard to the battlefield?

The pattern of this development, however, remains, like that of the prefecture's juridical role, a matter of some contention. Durry regards Fuscus as the first Praetorian prefect to command a field army with a degree of independence.⁶⁶ De Laet denounces this view as 'une erreur flagrante',⁶⁷ and cites examples of military missions undertaken at earlier dates by the Praetorian prefect.⁶⁸ But the incidents which he selects either do not convince - Seianus participated in the suppression of the mutiny in Pannonia in AD. 14, but his role was certainly less important and less sinister than Tacitus suggests⁶⁹ - or /

or are of doubtful relevance - the Praetorian prefect, in this case Seianus, is not mentioned as being involved in any way with the cohorts who fought with Germanicus in AD. 16 or with the arrangements four years later for the escorting of his ashes from Brundisium to Rome.⁷⁰

He also claims to see similarities in the type of command held by Rufrius Pollio,⁷¹ who received a triumphal statue after the successful invasion of Britain in AD. 43, and that of Fuscus. Yet their roles were quite different. Fuscus was in complete charge of the Dacian expedition. Suetonius is definite on this point and his words - *cui belli summam commiserat*⁷² - leave no room for doubt. Pollio's presence in Britain, on the other hand, clearly relates to his responsibilities for the emperor's security and to his command of the Praetorian cohorts who accompanied their emperor during that campaign. His role was clearly, despite his subsequent award, that of a subordinate, with the overall direction of the campaign firmly in the hands of Aulus Plautius. We do not know whether Pollio had tactical command even of the Praetorian cohorts or, indeed, whether the cohorts were utilised during the fighting.

Yet De Laet's misconceptions do not mean that Durry is correct. In fact, he is wrong. He ignores the year AD. 69 which provides us with the first examples of prefects holding field commands.⁷³ We should note the date - a year of invasion and bloody civil war. The coincidence should not amaze us. Although the prefecture was created in response to a political problem, the potential had always existed for the Praetorian prefect - the commander of an elite unit of around 5,000 men - to become involved in military matters.

Hence /

Hence Seianus in Pannonia, Rufrius Pollio in Britain. But this was command without control, responsibility without power. It might well have continued in this fashion with the prefects slowly developing a military profile and occasionally obtaining a battlefield command. The cataclysm of AD. 69 completely changed the pace of this development. Nor was this solely related to the involvement of the Praetorian cohorts in the fighting. The uncertainties of that year led emperors like Otho and Vitellius to value fidelity above efficiency. Indeed incompetence, provided it was artfully shrouded in a cloak of specious loyalty, was not only tolerated but, in fact, preferred to that honest ability which is unassertive and cares nothing for expediency. And so field commands were turned over to Praetorian prefects, with, it must be said, a notable lack of success. Licinius Proculus, who acted as Otho's chief-of-staff during the fighting in north Italy, devoted most of his time to the slandering of better generals.⁷⁴ Julius Priscus and Alfenus Varus watched the Praetorian cohorts entrusted to them by Vitellius disintegrate in the face of the Flavian advance.⁷⁵ This is, of course, a universal truth - that the nature and values of any society cannot survive the disruption of a major war unchanged. We may, therefore, conclude that the internal peace, which existed for 100 years after the battle of Actium and was, to some extent, the *raison d'être* of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, was instrumental in restricting the military involvement of the Praetorian prefect. We can discern before AD. 69 the roots of its later development, but no more.

There was never any shortage of candidates for the prefecture even during /

during the period after Perennis' death when Cleander, the imperial chamberlain, orchestrated the elevation to the post, then the removal from it, of a whole succession of hapless pawns.⁷⁶ Such was the allure of power, of even the semblance of power. The rewards could, of course, be substantial. Three Praetorian prefects - Seius Strabo, Macro and Lusius Geta - were promoted to the prefecture of Egypt.⁷⁷ Seianus, Rufrius Crispinus, Burrus and Nymphidius Sabinus all gained ornamenta consularia.⁷⁸ Macro was offered ornamenta praetoria, as was Arrius Varus after the Flavian victory.⁷⁹ Valerius Ligur was granted a seat when he accompanied Augustus to the Senate. A similar concession was given to Rufius Pollio who was also awarded ornamenta triumphalia and a statue in AD. 43 after the British campaign.⁸⁰

Yet if the opportunities for advancement were great, so too were the risks associated with the post. Imperial favour was ever fickle and arbitrary. Suspicion was easily roused, sometimes, as in the cases of Faenius Rufus⁸¹ and Nymphidius Sabinus,⁸² with justification, but more often because, like Seianus⁸³ and Macro,⁸⁴ the ambitions of the prefects were judged to be dangerous to their emperors, or because, like Catonius Justus⁸⁵ and Rufrius Pollio,⁸⁶ they failed to adapt to the machiavellian intriguing that was court politics. But the very fact that these emperors thought it expedient to execute their prefects is also a sign of the growing power of the prefecture. The despot does not fear, and so has no need to eliminate, the insignificant. But the prefecture carried with it such a high profile that even the inconspicuous gained prominence through tenure. And Seianus' prefecture /

prefecture stood as an object lesson on the danger of appointing someone of eminence.

Since, however, it was the emperors themselves who made the appointments and set out the conditions of service, it seems reasonable to conclude that they got the prefects they deserved. The morals of the prefects tend to mirror those of the emperors they served and of the society of which they were part. So Seianus and Macro under Tiberius, Tigellinus and Nymphidius Sabinus under Nero. But such an approach ignores the developing nature of the prefecture itself. It was increasingly difficult for any emperor to impose limits on the scope of that office. He could rid himself of a prefect easily - Seianus' fall shows us that much - but his need for security compelled him to appoint another. Emperor and prefect were bound quite inextricably together and if the dependency in the relationship was unequal, it was undoubtedly mutual.

ABBREVIATIONS

AE	<i>L'Année Épigraphique</i>
AJP	American Journal of Philology.
Anc. Soc.	Ancient Society.
Ant. Class.	L'Antiquité Classique.
BMC ¹	H. Mattingly, Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum 1 (London 1923).
Braund	D. C. Braund, Augustus to Nero; A Sourcebook on Roman History 31 BC. - AD. 68.
CAH	Cambridge Ancient History.
CIG	Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum.
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.
CJ	Classical Journal.
CP	Classical Philology.
CQ	Classical Quarterly.
CW	Classical Weekly.
Durry	M. Durry, Les Cohortes Prétorienes (Paris 1968) rev. ed.
Epig. Stud.	Epigraphische Studien.
Ges. Schr.	Gesammelte Schriften.
Grant AOC	M. Grant, The Army of the Caesars (London 1974).
ILS	H. Dessau, Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae (3 vols, Berlin 1892 - 1916, repr. 1954-5).
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies.
Num. Chron.	Numismatic Chronicle.
Passerini	A. Passerini, Le Coorti Pretorie (Rome 1939).
PBSR	Papers of the British School at Rome.
PP	Parola del Passato.
PIR	Prosopographia Imperii Romani.
RE	Real-Encyclopädie der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft ed. K. Wissowa et al. (Berlin 1894 - 1980).
Rend. Linc.	/

ABBREVIATIONS (Cont'd.)

Rend. Linc.	Rendiconti dell' accademia dei Lincei.
Rh. Mus.	Rheinisches Museum für Philologie.
RIC	C. H. V. Sutherland, The Roman Imperial Coinage (31 BC. - AD. 69) ed. 2. (London 1984).
Riv. Fil.	Rivista di Filologia.
SEHRE ²	M. Rostovtzeff, A Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire, ed. P. Fraser, 2 vols. (Oxford 1957).
Small.	E. M. Smallwood, Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero (Cambridge 1967).
TAPA	Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association.
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik.

N O T E S

CHAPTER I : THE AUGUSTAN GUARD AND ITS PREDECESSORS

1. I do not mean to imply that Augustus was a reactionary, although he clearly shared with Romans of all classes 'an especial veneration for authority, precedent and tradition a rooted distaste of change, unless change could be shown to be in harmony with ancestral custom' R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford 1939) p.315.

For Augustus' own attitude to change see Macrobius 2. 4. 18 where, asked by Seius Strabo for his opinion of Cato, he is alleged to have replied -

'quisquis praesentem statum civitatis commutare non volet, et civis et vir bonus est'.
2. Durry p.67.
3. We know from Polybius (6. 31. 1-4) that both cavalry and infantry detachments, ἀπόλεκτοι τῶν ἐπιλεκτῶν sometimes escorted or camped beside the consul.
4. Livy 2. 20. 2. I think that it could be argued that this example is anachronistic, worked into the bare records by a 1st century historian thinking of exempla recentiora.
5. Livy 29. 1. 2 trecentos iuvenes, florentes aetate et virium robore insignes, inermes circa se habebat.
6. Festus 1. 7. Praetoria cohors est dicta, quod a praetore non discedebat. Scipio enim Africanus primus fortissimum quemque delegit, qui ab eo in bello non discederent et cetero munere militiae vacarent et sesquiplexis stipendium acciperent.

This too (see note 4) could be anachronistic.
7. App. *Hisp.* 84.

Durry p.72 describes such a unit as 'une cohorte panachée'.
8. Sall. *Iug.* 98. 1. It remained common, however, for young nobles to gain military experience by serving on the staff of legionary commanders. (Sall. *Iug.* 64. 4); Caesar (*BG* 1. 39. 2) did not have a high regard for their military abilities ('non magnum in re militari usum habebant').
9. For suggestions as to the origin of the term 'cohors praetoria' see Durry p.69-71.
10. /

10. Cic. Verr. 2. 2. 30; 2. 2. 34; 2. 2. 66; 2. 3. 70, cp. Durry p.72 'elle n'a rien de militaire'.
11. Cic. Ad Quint. Frat. 1. 1. 12.
12. Cic. Cat. 2. 23 scortorum cohortem praetoriam; for the translation see M. Grant, Cicero; Selected Political Speeches (London 1969) p.106.
13. Catull. 10. 9 - 13.

respondi id quod erat, nihil neque ipsis
nec praetoribus esse nec cohorti
cur quisquam caput unctius referret
praesertim quibus esset irrumator
praetor, nec faceret pili cohortem.

It had long been the practice of Roman governors to include in their entourage talented writers and poets. Lucilius, for example, was with Scipio Aemilianus at Numantia in 134 BC. By such methods did a Roman noble advertise his patronage of the arts and indulge his hopes of immortality for his achievements (Hor. , Epist. 1. 3. 6-8; 1. 8. 2; 1. 8. 14; Sat. 1. 7. 23-5; Tib. 1. 3. 1; 1. 7). This entourage of personal friends (and not just literary ones) was the origin of the cohors amicorum during the Principate (Tac. Ann. 6. 9. 2) by which time the force of the term 'cohors praetoria' was purely military.

14. Cic. Ad Fam. 15. 4. 7; cp Ad Att. 7. 1. 6.
15. Cic. Verr. 2. 1. 36.
16. Sall. Cat. 60. 5; 61. 3.
17. Caes. BG 1. 40. 15; cp. 1. 42. 6.
18. Suetonius (Aug. 10) alleges that Octavian tried to arrange the murder of Antony.
19. App. BC. 3. 40; Cic. Phil. 8. 35; P. A. Brunt (Italian Manpower 225 BC. - AD. 14 (Oxford 1971) p.320 note 4) is rightly sceptical of Appian's claims that Antony's bodyguard consisted wholly of centurions; that they were paid as such seems much more likely.
20. App. BC. 3. 45; 3. 52 (Antony's cohort); 3. 66 (Octavian's cohort). Sulpicius Galba (Cic. Ad. Fam. 10. 30. 1) mentions in a letter of the 20th of April 43 BC. that Antony had 2 praetorian cohorts, his own and that of Silanus.

21. App. BC. 3. 67.
22. App. BC. 4. 115.
23. App. BC. 5. 3; Dio Cass. 48. 2.3.
24. App. BC. 5. 24; 5. 34.
25. App. BC. 5. 59.
26. Plut. Ant. 53.
27. Plut. Ant. 39.
28. H. A. Grueber, *Coins of the Roman Republic in the British Museum* (London 1910) vol. 2 p.526 nos.183 and 184 = M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (Cambridge 1975) 544/1.
29. Grueber, op. cit. p.527 nos.185 and 186 = Crawford, op. cit. 544/12.
30. Grant AOC p.91.
31. Oros. 6. 19. 6.
32. M. Hammond, 'The Significance of the Speech of Maecenas in Dio Cassius, Book LII' TAPA 63 (1932) p.88-102.
33. Suet. Aug. 17; Dio Cass. 51. 3. 4.
34. Suet. Aug. 32. It is tempting to link this passage with Maecenas' warning to Augustus (Dio Cass. 52. 27. 5) on the dangers of brigandage if he fails to recruit Italians into his army. F. Millar (*A Study of Cassio Dio* (Oxford 1964) p.109) argues convincingly that this passage relates to the situation in Dio's own time when Septimius Severus stopped recruitment of Italians into the Praetorian cohorts (Dio Cass. 74. 2. 5-6).
35. We can hardly count as a serious rival Lepidus' son who in 30 BC. tried to suborn some of the legions, possibly those originally under his father's command, which were returning from the east (Livy, Per. 133; App. BC. 4.50; Vell. Pat. 2. 88; Dio Cass. 51. 3. 1-4; cp. 54. 15. 4).

Nevertheless it was largely Maecenas' suppression of this conspiracy which led Passerini (p.275) to include him in his list of Praetorian prefects: cp. Durry p.157 'si Mécène, par le commandement qu'il exerça sur Rome et l'Italie durant les absences de son prince et ami, fut le chef des cohortes, on ne pourrait sans abus l'appeler le premier préfet du prétoire.'
36. /

36. F. Miller and E. Segal, *Caesar Augustus - Seven Aspects* (Oxford 1984) I. Z. Yavetz, *The Res Gestae and Augustus' Public Image* p. 17. 'But the old traditions died slowly, and the few aristocrats and their sons who had survived the civil wars continued to believe that freedom did not mean serving a just master, but serving no master at all.'

37. Even after Actium, when he was pursuing a policy of reconciliation and *Clementia* was about to become his political watchword (*Res Gestae* 3; *Vell. Pat.* 2. 86. 2), Octavian was unwilling to show mercy to the assassins of Caesar. So D. Turullus (*Dio Cass.* 51. 8. 2f) and Cassius of Parma (*Vell. Pat.* 2. 87. 3) were killed. There were other victims too; Scribonius Curio, as stubborn and self-destructive as his mother, was executed (*Dio Cass.* 51. 2. 5). Aquillius Florus and his son were also put to death (*Dio Cass.* 51. 2. 5-6). P. Canidius the Antonian general, was also killed (*Vell. Pat.* 2. 87. 3). Political necessity was invoked to justify these killings as well as the many vicious acts which Suetonius alleges Octavian committed earlier in his career - the murder of the consul Hirtius in 43 BC. (*Aug.* 11), the sacrificing of 300 prisoners of senatorial or equestrian rank in 40 BC. after the capture of Perusia (*Aug.* 15), as well as the killing of a Roman knight Pinarius, enforcing the suicide of a consul-elect Tedi-
us Afer, and the blinding of a praetor named Quintus Gallius (*Aug.* 27). Whether such allegations were true (and some were certainly not: see Miller and Segal, *op. cit.* p.2-3) is not important; their existence indicates a depth of opposition to the new princeps (*cp. Dio Cass.* 53. 9. 3).

38. *Arist. Fr.* 516 (*Periander*); *Hdt.* 1. 59 (*Pisistratus*); *cp. Aesch. Aga.* 1651 (*Aegisthus*).

39. *Livy* 6. 14. 5; *cp. Miller and Segal, op. cit.* p.13-14 'Augustus refused to be regarded as the darling of the plebs only - some kind of *parens plebis Romanae*'; *cp. Pliny, Ep.* 9. 5.

40. *Plut. Sull.* 8.

41. *App. BC.* 1. 100; *Plutarch, Sulla* 34.

42. *Ov. Fast.* 2. 127-8.

43. *Syme, RR.* p.307. On Julius Caesar's lack of respect for the Senate see *Suet. Jul.* 78.

44. *cp. Philostr. VS* 2. 26 where it is recorded that the sophist Heracleides, once broke down in an oration before Septimius Severus, 'fearing the court and the guards'.

45. /

45. Syme RR. p.481; cp. Suet. Aug. 51.
46. Suet. Aug. 54.
47. Dio Cass. 55. 14. 1.
48. Tac. Ann. 16. 27 aditum senatus globus togatorum obsederat non occultis gladiis.
 Tac. Hist. 1. 38 nec una cohors togata defendit nunc Galbam sed detinet.
 Pliny, Pan. 23. 3 nam milites nihil a plebⁱ habitu, tranquillitate, modestia differebant.
 It should be noted that these references are from a later period.
49. Dio Cass. 54. 3. 2; Suet. Aug. 19. For an explanation of Suetonius' rather brief treatment of this important conspiracy see A. Wallace-Hadrill, Suetonius (London 1983) p.13.
50. Tac. Ann 4. 5; Dio Cassius (56. 24. 3) claims that there were 10 cohorts at this time. Passerini (p.48) attempts to reconcile the 10 bodyguard units of Dio with the 9 Praetorian cohorts of Tacitus by suggesting that there was a cohors speculatorum which counted as the 10th cohort. E. Echols ('The Roman City Police: Origin and Development' CJ 53 (1967-8) p.381) suggests that the German bodyguard qualifies as the 10th unit of Augustus' bodyguards.
 More probable than either of these views is that Dio has made a mistake (see note 57).
51. Durry, p.77-8.
52. L. Keppie, The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire (London 1984) P.153.
53. ILS 2701; see also D. L. Kennedy, 'Some Observations on the Praetorian Guard' Anc. Soc. 9 (1978) p.275 note 3; G. Webster, The Roman Imperial Army (3rd ed.) (London 1985) p.95 note 5.
 ILS 2032 suggests that Gaius may have been responsible for the enlargement of the Guard.
54. AE 1978 no.286.
55. C. Letta, 'Le imagines Caesarum di un praefectus castrorum Aegyptii e l'XI coorte pretoria' Athenaeum 56 (1978) p.3-19 (especially p.10-11).
 B. Dobson, 'Praefectus Castrorum Aegyptii - a Reconsideration' Chronique d'Egypte 57 (1982) p.322-37 (especially p.325-328).
 Lawrence Keppie has suggested to me that the stone was misread and provides no evidence for an 11th cohort.

56. Dio Cass. 56. 24. 6.
57. Tac. Hist. 2. 93 sedecim praetoriae, quattuor urbanae cohortes scribebantur, quis singula milia inessent.
58. Durry, p.82.
59. Passerini, p.58-67. Two of the most recent studies, Keppie (op. cit. p.187) and Webster (op. cit. p.97) accept that the effective of the Praetorian cohorts until AD. 69 was 500 men.
60. Tac. Ann. 1. 24.
61. Pliny, HN 5. 20 (Gunugu in Mauretania); Dio Cass. 53. 25. 5. (Aoste).
62. Tac. Ann. 4. 5. Etruria ferme Umbriaque delectae aut vetere Latio et coloniis antiquitus Romanis.

Cisalpine Gaul, Strabo's (5. 1. 12) 'fine store of men' also contributed heavily throughout this period to the Praetorian Guard (see Passerini p.148).
63. Verg. Aen. 8. 678 hinc Augustus agens Italos in proelia Caesar. cp. Syme, RR p.287 'It is evident that the most confident as well as the most vocal assertions of Italian nationalism followed rather than preceded the War of Actium'.
64. Pliny, HN. 7. 149 where Augustus complains about the 'penuria iuventutis'.
65. Numerous inscriptions, especially from the principate of Claudius onwards, indicate that a tour of duty as a centurion or tribune in the urban cohorts was usual before service in these capacities as a Praetorian officer. H. Freis, (Die cohortes urbanae, Epig. Stud. 2 (Cologne 1967)) has chronological lists of 22 urban centurions (p.78-9) and 26 urban tribunes (p.82-3) with previous and following posts indicated to help clarify the cursus.

It should be noted, however, that there was still considerable flexibility in the order of posts in the pre-Claudian period (B. Dobson, Die Primipilares (Cologne 1978) p.8, p.10f).
66. We know from Dositheus of one case of a man petitioning the emperor Hadrian to be allowed to serve in the Praetorians and being told to enter the urban cohorts first and earn a transfer later.

Divi Hadriani sententiae et epistulae, Corp. Gloss. Lot. 3, p.3 1.24 'petente quodam ut militaret, Adrianus dixit, 'Ubi vis militare?' Illo dicente, 'in pretorio', Adrianus interrogavit; 'quam /

'quam staturam habes'. Illo dicente, 'quinque pedes et semis'. Adrianus dixit, 'interim in urbanam milita, et si bonus miles fueris, tertio stipendio poteris in praetorium transire'.

Durry (p.15) describes service in the urban cohorts as 'l'anti-chambre du prétoire', but Passerini (p.170) rightly objects to his notion that all urban soldiers moved on to the Praetorian Guard.

67. Dio Cass. 54. 25. 6.
68. Dio Cass. 55. 23. 1. It seems probable that these changes occurred after the military situation began to deteriorate in AD. 6.
69. Dobson, *Primipilares* p.41-4.
70. Dio Cass. 53. 11. 5. On the problems caused by badly-paid soldiers, see Philo, *In Flacc.* 5. For details of the exact amount members of the Praetorian Guard received, see P. A. Brunt, 'Pay and Superannuation in the Roman Army' *PBSR.* 18 (1950) p.55'.
71. Dio Cass. 55. 23. 1.
72. Tac. Ann. 1. 8; Suet. Aug. 101; Dio Cass. 56. 32. 2. G. R. Watson (*The Roman Soldier* (London 1969) p.98) suggests that Tiberius may have been the instigator of this change.
73. Suet. Cl. 10; Nero 10; Tac. Ann. 12. 69.
74. Suet. Aug. 49.
75. We should perhaps treat warily Durry's theory (p.12-16) that Augustus created the 3 urban cohorts as a senatorial counter-weight to the Praetorians.

Firstly, the exact date of the formation of this unit remains unclear. Durry's suggestion that it was founded in 27 BC. (p.12 'en même temps que les prétoriennes Auguste créa les cohortes urbaines') is logical and fits in neatly with his general argument. It is certainly preferable to the highly improbable suggestion of Echols (op. cit. p.380) that 'Augustus, in 16 BC., detached the 3 'urban' praetorian cohorts from regular praetorian status and assigned them, as regular city police, to the personal command of the urban prefect'. It is probably best, however, to assume that this unit was established by Augustus towards the end of his principate around the time of the rising in Pannonia when there were serious grain shortages in Rome and the mob had found a champion in Publius Plautius Rufus (Suet. Aug. 19; Dio Cass. 55. 27. 2-3).

Secondly, Freis (op. cit. p.4-5) has rejected Durry's theory on the grounds that the commander of the urban cohorts, the praefectus urbi, although a senator, was appointed by Augustus. This /

This does not, by itself, invalidate Durry's theory, since the senatorial perception of their subservient role in this relationship may have been limited by the fact that one of their number was actually in charge of 3 armed cohorts.

Regarding the number of cohorts Augustus established we should accept the 3 of Jos. BJ 2. 205, and Tac. Ann. 4. 5. 3, rather than the 4 of Jos. AJ 19. 188, and Dio Cass. 55. 24. 6.

As to the original effective of the individual cohorts, Freis rightly dismisses Passerini and Echols who claim 1500 and 1000 respectively, arguing instead for quingenary cohorts.

76. For a full history of this unit see H. Bellen, *Die germanische Leibwache der römischen Kaiser des julisch-claudischen Hauses*, (Wiesbaden 1981).

There is an older work by Th. Mommsen, 'Die germanischen Leibwächter der römischen Kaiser', *Ges. Schr.* 6 (1910) p.17f.

In maintaining a foreign unit of this kind Augustus was following the example of the warlords of the late Republican era. Marius had an escort from the *Bardaeis*, an Illyrian tribe (App. BC 1 70-1). Julius Caesar had a Spanish unit to protect him (Suet. Jul. 86; App. BC. 2. 107; Vell. Pat. 2. 57). Petreius, Pompey's legate in 49 BC., had a guard of Iberian horsemen (Caesar, BC. 1. 75. 2). Decimus Brutus had a Celtic bodyguard (App. Civ. 3. 97). Octavian himself had a guard of Spaniards which he disbanded after Actium (Suet. Aug. 49).

77. Grant, AOC. p.91.

78. After the Varian disaster in AD. 9 Augustus split this unit up and stationed the sections in different places well away from Rome. (Dio Cass. 56. 23. 4). Ironically, however, the Germans eventually replaced the Praetorians, for after Constantine disbanded the Praetorian Guard, he established special imperial guards, called the *Scholae Palatinae*, consisting of elite cavalry regiments recruited mainly from Germans (see R. I. Frank, 'Scholae Palatinae; The Palace Guards of the Later Roman empire', *Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome*, vol. 23, (Rome 1969)).

79. Dio Cassius (52. 24. 1f) has Maecenas advise Augustus of the dangers which a sole prefect might cause and of the advantages of appointing two prefects.

However Millar (Dio Cassius p.115) argues convincingly that this speech is an implicit criticism of the power of Gaius Fulvius Plautianus who was sole prefect from AD. 197 until his assassination eight years later (see also L. L. Howe, *The Praetorian Prefect from Commodus to Diocletian* (Chicago 1942) p.69).

80. /

80. Grant (AOC p.93) suggests another explanation: 'The odium of stationing troops in Italy seemed less if they came directly under so august a personage, rather than some general or another whose military power in Italy his equals would have been likely to resent'.

81. Dio Cass. 55. 10. 10.

82. R. Syme, 'Guard Prefects of Trajan and Hadrian', JRS 70 (1980) p.64.

The appointment of prefects precedes Julia's disgrace in Dio's account but, as Syme notes, Dio's chronology is known to be wrong in at least one item during that year, for he places the granting of the title 'pater patriae' after August when we know that it was voted on the 5th of February.

83. The names of four others besides Iullus Antonius are provided by Velleius Paterculus (2. 100. 4f); Titus Quinctius Crispinus Sulpicianus, the consul in 9 BC., a Sempronius Gracchus (cp. Tac. Ann. 1. 53. 3; Dio Cassius 55. 10.15), a Scipio and an Appius Claudius. From Macrobius (1. 2. 7.) we have one other name, that of a certain Demosthenes, possibly a Greek intellectual. For Gracchus as a poet, see Ov. Pont. 4. 16. 31. and for Iullus Antonius as a performer see Hor. Od. 4. 2.

84. Sen. Ben. 6. 32. 1 admissos gregatim adulteros, pererratam nocturnis comissionibus civitatem, forum ipsum ac rostra ex quibus pater legem de adulteriis tulerat filiae in stupra placuisse, cottidianum ad Marsyam concursum, cum ex adultera in quaestuariam versa ius omnis licentiae sub ignoto adultero peteret.

Pliny, HN 21.9 filia divi Augusti cuius luxuria coronatum Marsyan litterae illius dei gemunt.

Tacitus seems to accept sexual aberration as the explanation of Iullus' death in two places (Ann. 3. 18. 1. Iulli Antonii, qui domum Augusti violasset; Ann. 4. 44. 3. Iullo Antonio ob adulterium Iuliae morte punito), although he also includes Iullus in the list of those put to death for plotting against Augustus (Ann. 1. 10. 4. interfectos Romae Varrones Egnatios Iullos).

Dio Cassius accepts Julia's dissolute behaviour (55. 10. 12) but notes that political ambition was the official cause of Iullus' death (55. 10. 15).

85. R. Syme, 'The Crisis of 2 BC.' Sitzungberichte (Munich 1974) p.23. This article is a first-rate analysis of the whole episode, especially in the importance which it attaches to Iullus Antonius' role.

Although it is now generally accepted that the offences were political (cp. Syme, RR p.432), there are still those who dissent from this view; F. Norwood (The Riddle of Ovid's Relegatio' CP 58 (1963) p.150-62) regards the scandal of 2 BC. as purely sexual in nature.

One might profitably compare the official Augustan version of the whole incident with the similar emphasis on sexual decadence, in this case homosexuality, put forward by Hitler's government after the assassination of Ernst Rohm, the S.A. leader, on the 30th of June 1934.

W. H. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (London 1960) p.280-1 'In the first communiques much was made of the depraved morals of Roehm and the other S.A. leaders who were shot. Dietrich (Hitler's press chief) asserted that the scene of the arrest of Heines, who was caught in bed at Wiessee with a young man, 'defied description', and Hitler in addressing the surviving storm troop leaders in Munich at noon on June 30 declared that for their corrupt morals alone these men deserved to die.'

86. B. M. Levick, 'The Fall of Julia the Younger', *Latomus* 34, (1976) p.301; cp. another earlier article by the same author 'Tiberius' Retirement to Rhodes in 6 BC.' *Latomus* 31 (1972) p.779f.
87. Pliny, HN 7. 149 adulterium filiae et parricidae consilia palam facta.
88. Durry, p.163.
89. Durry, p.158.
90. Grant, AOC p.94. If, however, we accept that the collegiate arrangement of the republican consulship was to ensure that one consul was always available even when the other was disloyal, then it is possible to see Mommsen's point.
91. Tac. Ann. 1. 7; Grant (AOC p.94) also mentions Valerius Ligur as a single holder of the office, but there is nothing to support this view in the historian's passing mention of him (Dio Cass. 60. 23. 3.).
92. H. Dessau, *Geschichte der römischen Kaiserzeit* vol. 1 (Berlin 1924) p.257.
93. B. M. Levick, 'Drusus Caesar and the Adoptions of AD. 4' *Latomus* 25 (1966) p.227-44.
94. Durry, p.157.
95. Dio Cass. 78. 4. 1; Hdn. 5. 1. 5. The Senate did, however, confirm the choice of the army since Macrinus was not, at first, unpopular, especially in comparison with his despotic predecessor, Caracallus. (Hdn. 5. 2. 1; SHA. Macr. 7. 1-4). a/
96. /

96. Jos. AJ 19. 186; Luc. 7. 691f; Tac. Agr. 3.1.
97. Augustus was, without realising it, creating a precedent, the logical culmination of which was reached in the middle of the 3rd century with the formal decree of the emperor Gallienus which excluded senators from serving as military tribunes or as legionary commanders.
- On the reforms of Gallienus, see H. G. Pflaum, 'Zur Reform des Kaisers Gallienus', *Historia* 25 (1976) p.109f.
- The new mobile field armies were also commanded by equestrian army officers who were independent of any provincial governor.
98. The exile of Julia to Pandateria was followed later by that of Julia the Younger, her mother's daughter both in promiscuity and ambition. (Tac. Ann. 4. 71; cp. 3. 24; Scholiast on Juv. Sat. 6. 157f. For a full discussion of the political aspects of this exile, see B. M. Levick, *The Fall of Julia the Younger*, op. cit. p.301-339).
- Around the same time the youngest of Augustus' grandsons, the allegedly depraved Agrippa Postumus, was also banished. (Tac. Ann. 1. 3. 5; Vell. Pat. 2. 112. 7; Suet. Aug. 65; Dio Cass. 56. 27. 1f; 55. 32. 1f).
- Even on their remote island prisons this group, both individually and collectively, was a potential threat to Augustus. There were ambitious rogues ready, in their desperation, to rescue these imperial outcasts and to set them up as a focus for all those opposed to Augustus. Suetonius (Aug. 19) tells of two such men, Lucius Audasius, a feeble old man, who had been in trouble for forgery, and Asinius Epicadius, a half-breed of Parthian descent, who developed a plot to kidnap or rescue Agrippa Postumus and his mother Julia from their island prisons and take them 'to the armies'.
99. Suet. Aug. 99; Tac. Ann. 1. 8.
100. J. F. C. Fuller (*The Decisive Battles of the Western World* (London 1954) vol. 1 p.159) has no doubts on this matter. 'The Praetorians were an ever-present sanction of Augustus' authority and the symbol of what his government really was, a judiciously organised military tyranny'.

CHAPTER II : THE PRAETORIAN GUARD OF TIBERIUS

1. Dio Cass. 57. 2.3.
2. M. Grant, Tacitus: The Annals of Imperial Rome (London 1956) p.16-22.
3. Tac. Ann. 1. 7; Suet. Tib. 24; Dio Cass. 57. 2. 2.
4. Tac. Ann. 1. 8; Suet. Aug. 101.
5. Tac. Ann. 1. 7.
6. Tac. Ann. 1. 7.
7. Tac. Ann. 1. 8 nunc senem principem, longa potentia, provisis etiam heredum in rem publicam opibus, auxilio scilicet militari tuendum, ut sepultura eius quieta foret.
8. Tac. Ann. 1. 7; cp. Dio Cass. 57. 2. 1.
9. Tac. Ann. 1. 31f; Suet. Tib. 25; Gaius 1.
10. Tac. Ann. 1. 42.
11. Suet. Gaius 4; Grant, AOC p.128.
12. Vell. Pat. 2. 24. 1; cp. Syme, RR p.457 'The exaggeration is palpable and shameless'; A. Garzetti, From Tiberius to the Antonines - a History of the Roman Empire AD. 14 - 192 (London 1974) p.22 'The gloomy colours used by Velleius serve naturally only to throw into relief the merits of Tiberius'.
13. Tac. Ann. 1. 16-30.
14. Tac. Ann. 1. 24.
15. Tac. Ann. 1. 17 an praetorias cohortis, quae binos denarios acceperint, quae post sedecim annos penatibus suis reddantur, plus periculorum suscipere?
cp. Suet. Tib. 25; Vell. Pat. 2. 125. 2.
On the differing pay scales see Watson, op. cit. p.97-8; on length of service see Dio Cass. 54. 25. 6; 55. 23. 1.
16. Tac. Ann. 1. 27.
17. /

17. Tac. Ann. 1. 29. We should note that among the deputation was Justus Catonius, later a Praetorian prefect under Claudius.
 18. Tac. Ann. 1. 29.
 19. Tac. Ann. 1. 28; 1. 30; Dio Cass. 57. 4. 4-5.
 20. Tac. Ann. 1. 30.
 21. Tac. Ann. 2. 16.
 22. Tacitus describes Percennius as 'dux olim theatralium operarum' (Ann. 1. 16).
 23. Tac. Ann. 1. 77; Suet. Tib. 37; see also Z. Yavetz, *Plebs and Princeps* (Oxford 1969) p.11.
 24. Suet. Tib. 19.
 25. Tac. Ann. 1. 77.
 26. Suet. Tib. 37: The Praetorians may also have been involved in the suppression in AD. 24 of a potentially dangerous slaves' revolt around Brundisium, organised by Titus Curtisius, himself a former soldier in the Praetorian cohorts (Tac. Ann. 4. 27).
 27. Dio Cass. 55. 14. 1.
 28. Tacitus (Ann. 1. 3) suggests that Livia may have contrived at the exile of Agrippa Postumus, but does not attempt to deny the youth's brutish depravity; 'rudem sane bonorum artium et robore corporis stolide ferocem'. Velleius Paterculus (2. 112. 7) is even more damning; 'mira pravitate animi atque ingenii in praecipitia conversus patris atque eiusdem avi sui animum alienavit sibi, moxque crescentibus in dies vitiis dignum furore suo habuit exitium'.
- Agrippa's parentage clearly made him a threat to Tiberius, although Syme (RR p.306) is right to dismiss as a 'fiction' the rumour recounted by Tacitus and Dio Cassius that Augustus visited his grandson on Planasia during the last months of his life and that some sort of reconciliation occurred. We know from Suetonius (Aug. 19) of an attempt, during Augustus' lifetime, to rescue Agrippa and take him to the armies of the Rhine. The news of Augustus' death prompted Clemens, Agrippa's slave, to adopt a similar plan (Tac. Ann. 2. 39). The extent to which the prince himself was involved in these adventures is unclear, although A. E. Pappano ('Agrippa Postumus' CP 35 (1941) p.30-45) argues that Agrippa was plotting against Tiberius.
29. /

29. Tac. Ann. 1. 6; Suet. Tib. 22; Dio Cass. 57. 16. 5-6.

I think it unlikely that Agrippa Postumus died a natural death turned into a violent one by an anti-Tiberian tradition. W. Allen Jr. ('The Death of Agrippa Postumus' TAPA 78 (1947) p.131-9) suggests, largely on the basis of Velleius Paterculus' phrase 'crescentibus in dies vitiis', that Agrippa was suffering from a brain tumour.

30. Tac. Ann. 1. 6; cp. 3. 30 interficiendi Postumi Agrippae conscius.

31. Tac. Ann. 1. 53.

32. Tac. Ann. 2. 27. eius negotium initium, ordinem, finem curatius disseram, quia tum primum reperta sunt quae per tot annos rem publicam exedere.

Libo was the great-grandson of Pompey and the great-nephew of Scribonia, Augustus' first wife.

33. Tac. Ann. 2. 27; Seneca's verdict (Ep. 70. 10) is worth recording; adulescens tam stolidus quam nobilis, maiora sperans quam illo saeculo quisquam sperare poterat aut ipse ullo.

cp. R. F. Leon 'Notes on the Background and Character of Libo Drusus' CJ. 53 (1957) p.77-80.

34. Tac. Ann. 2. 27 defertur moliri res novas; Dio Cass. 57. 15. 4 *δόξαται τι νέωτεπίσειν*; Vell. Pat. 2. 129. 2 quam celeriter ingratum et nova molientem oppressit.

Suetonius (Tib. 30) tells us that Tiberius was afraid of him to the extent of replacing a leaden knife for the usual sharp double-bladed one normally used when they were making a pontifical sacrifice together and clinging tightly to his arm during an audience under the pretence of needing support.

35. Tac. Ann. 2. 31.

36. Garzetti, op. cit. p.46.

37. G. P. Baxter (Tiberius Caesar (London 1949) p.212) describes Sallustius as 'the head of some kind of special service'. Although it is generally accepted that an official secret service did not develop until much later, this does not preclude the existence of an unofficial spy network directed by Sallustius.

For the comparison with Walsingham see B. M. Levick, Tiberius the Politician (London 1976) p.66.

38. /

38. Tac. Ann. 2. 40; Suet. Tib. 25; Dio Cass. 57. 16. 3.

Such impostors were not uncommon. There was a false Marius in Cicero's time (A. E. Pappano, 'The Pseudo-Marius' CP 29 (1935) p.58-65), a false Drusus (Tac. Ann. 5. 10; Dio Cassius 58. 25. 1) and several false Neros (Tac. Hist. 1. 2; 2. 8; Suet. Nero 57).

More modern parallels were Lambert Simnel who pretended to be Edward of Warwick, the son of Richard the 3rd's murdered brother Clarence, and Perkin Warbeck who enjoyed some short-lived success as Richard of York, the younger of the two princes in the tower.

39. Tac. Ann. 2. 40 simulata conscientia; Suet. Tib. 25 fraude deceptum; Dio Cass. 57. 16. 4.

40. Tacitus (Ann. 2. 40) tells us that Sallustius' agents were two of his clients, but he also records another version - quidam milites fuisse tradunt. As J. Mogenet notes (La Conjurat[i]on de Clemens'. Ant. Class. 23 (1954) p.324), 'Il y a là un souci de minutie historique qui ne peut manquer de nous faire dresser l'oreille'.

41. Tac. Ann. 3. 14.

42. Tac. Ann. 3. 15.

43. Tac. Ann. 3. 4.

44. Tac. Ann. 3. 2.

45. R. S. Rogers, 'The Conspiracy of Agrippina' TAPA 62 (1931) p.141-148.

46. Tac. Ann. 4. 2; Suet. Tib. 37; Dio Cass. 57. 19. 6.

47. Suet. Aug. 49.

48. Tac. Ann. 4. 2.

49. Dio Cass. 57. 24. 5.

50. Tiberius' attitude to the princes was ambivalent. In AD. 23 when introducing them to the Senate, he described them as 'Augusti pronepotes, clarissimis maioribus genitos' (Tac. Ann. 4. 8). Yet the following year he rebuked the priests who included the names of Nero Caesar and Drusus Caesar along with his own in their prayers to the Gods - (Tac. Ann. 4. 17). It is clear that Tiberius wanted the princes on his own terms, that is to say, totally detached from the influence of Agrippina and her senatorial supporters whose threat he was determined to destroy. Charges were /

were made against Agrippina's friends; Gaius Silius and his wife Sosia (Tac. Ann. 4. 18f; cp. Dio Cass. 57. 22. 4b), and Publius Suillius, an ex-quaestor of Germanicus (Tac. Ann. 4. 31) of extortion and corruption. Two years later Agrippina's rage could not save her cousin, Claudia Pulchra, who was accused of unchastity, adultery and, for good measure, magic practices (Tac. Ann. 4. 52). Agrippina's inability to protect her closest partisans must have provided clear proof of the weakness of her position and caused many of her followers, like Publius Vitellius, to desert her (Tac. Ann. 3. 12; cp. 5. 8).

Finally, in AD. 28, Titus Sabinus, one of the few who had openly remained friendly with Agrippina, was accused of sedition, with the evidence obtained, at Seianus' instigation, in a manner both ludicrous and shameful (Tac. Ann. 3. 68-70; Dio Cass. 58. 1. 1b-3).

51. Tac. Ann. 4. 67.
52. Tac. Ann. 4. 67; cp. Suet. Tib. 53.
53. Tac. Ann. 5. 1.
54. Tac. Ann. 5. 3-4.
55. Suet. Tib. 64.
56. Suet. Tib. 53.
57. Suet. Tib. 54.
58. Dio Cass. 58. 3. 8.
59. Tac. Ann. 6. 23-4; Suet. Tib. 65; Gaius 7; cp. Dio Cass. 58. 22. 4.
60. M. Grant, Tacitus: Annals p18f.
61. Tac. Ann. 2. 34.
62. Dio Cass. 57. 11. 7.
63. Tac. Ann. 1. 13; Suet. Tib. 27.
64. Suet. Tib. 60.
65. /

65. Tac. Ann. 4. 67. I wonder whether Tiberius was, in fact, establishing garrisons in towns not too distant from Capreae, where of course there would not have been room for all the soldiers he would like to have nearby.
66. Suet. Tib. 60.
67. Suet. Cl. 21; Dio Cass. 60. 12. 4; 60. 17. 9.
68. Dio Cass. 55. 10. 10.
69. Vell. Pat. 2. 127. 3. It is accepted that the uncle mentioned is Quintus Junius Blaesus (Tac. Ann. 3. 35; 3. 72) but there has been much debate over the identity of the cousins and brothers. The main contributions to the solution of this problem have come from C. Cichorius 'Zur Familiengeschichte Seians' Hermes 39 (1904) p.461f; F. Adams 'The Consular Brothers of Sejanus' AJP 76 (1955) p.70-6; R. Sealey 'The Political Attachments of L. Aelius Seianus' Phoenix 15 (1961) p.97-114 and G. V. Sumner 'The Family Connections of L. Aelius Seianus' Phoenix 19 (1965) p.134-45. All the issues raised in these articles are thoroughly reviewed by R. Syme, The Augustan Aristocracy (Oxford 1986) p.300-312.
70. Tac. Ann. 4. 1 et prima iuventa Gaium Caesarem divi Augusti nepotem sectatus. Syme (RR p.428) takes Tacitus' statement to mean that Seianus courted Gaius' favour rather than actually followed him.

For Tiberius' behaviour when he met Gaius on Chios see Dio Cass. 55. 10. 19.
71. Tac. Ann. 1. 7; 1. 24.
72. Dio Cass. 57. 19. 6; ILS 8996.
73. Tac. Ann. 1. 69.
74. Tac. Ann. 3. 16.
75. Tac. Ann. 4. 2; Suet. Tib. 37; Dio Cass. 57. 19. 6.
76. R. Syme, Tacitus (Oxford 1958) p.286 note 2. Tacitus places the move to the new barracks in his account of the year AD. 23. It seems perfectly reasonable to assume that a considerable period of time elapsed between the decision to build a barracks, which may be related to a perceived threat from Agrippina, and the completion of the building.

Tiberius, who was too subtle a politician to rely solely on blatant intimidation, was conspicuously generous in his treatment of Nero Caesar, Germanicus' eldest son. He commended him to the Senate /

Senate on his assumption of the toga virilis, granted him a pontificate and allowed him to marry his granddaughter Julia (Tac. Ann. 3. 29; cp. 4. 8).

77. Tac. Ann. 4. 2. ut numeroque et robore et visu inter se fiducia ipsis, in ceteros metus oreretur.

cp. Dio Cass. 57. 19. 6.

78. Tac. Ann. 4. 2. et severius acturos, si vallum statuatur procul urbis inlecebris.

79. Durry, p.156.

80. R. Syme 'History or Biography: The Case of Tiberius Caesar' Historia 18 (1974) p.488.

'Tiberius had lavished on Seianus the treasures of a secret heart. Seianus appealed both to the weak side of his nature and to the strong, to his insecurities and to his admiration for ability wherever it might be discovered. Tiberius may have seen the efficient minister as a kind of deuterio-Agrippa. Hence, a double infatuation and a delusion more than intellectual.'

81. Tac. Ann. 4. 2; cp. Vell. Pat. 2. 127. 3; Dio Cass. 57. 19. 7.

82. Juv. Sat. 10. 90-2.

visne salutari sicut Seianus, habere
tantundem atque illi summas donare curules,
illum exercitibus praeponere

There can be little doubt that from AD. 20 onwards Seianus' influence grew steadily. In AD. 21 his uncle Q. Junius Blaesus was appointed, in preference to Manius Lepidus, to command the campaign against Tacfarinas in Africa (Tac. Ann. 3. 35). In the following year Julius Otho, a former school-teacher, was created a senator as a result of Seianus' favour (Tac. Ann. 3. 66) and the victorious Blaesus was granted triumphal decorations by Tiberius as a mark of honour to Seianus (Tac. Ann. 3. 72).

83. Tac. Ann. 4. 74; Dio Cass. 57. 21. 3; 58. 2. 7-8.

84. Tac. Ann. 3. 72; Dio Cass. 57. 21. 3. It was not unusual for the Praetorians to act as firefighters (cp. Dio Cass. 57. 14. 10).

85. Sen. Cons. ad Marc. 22 tunc vere theatrum perire; Dio Cass. 57. 24. 2.

86. Tac. Ann. 4. 2; Suet. Cl. 27; Tac. Ann. 6. 30.

87. /

87. Tac. Ann. 4. 3.
88. Although Apicata, whom Seianus now divorced, was later to allege that Seianus conspired with Livilla to murder Drusus (Suet. Tib. 62; Dio Cass. 58. 11. 6), this may be seen as the final spiteful act of a rejected and broken woman. There were certainly serious differences between Seianus and Drusus (Tac. Ann. 4. 7) and a blow was struck (Tac. Ann. 4. 3; Dio Cass. 57. 22. 1). Despite this, it seems probable that Drusus died a natural death (A. Boddington 'Sejanus, whose conspiracy?' AJP 84 (1963) p.9; Syme, Tacitus p.402).
89. Tac. Ann. 4. 40 id tantum aperiam nihil esse tam excelsum quod non virtutes istae tuusque in me animus mereantur datoque tempore vel in senatu vel in contione non reticebo.
90. Tac. Ann. 5. 6; 6. 8. The assumption that the betrothal was between Seianus and Livilla is widespread (R. Seager, Tiberius (London 1972) p.213; Levick, Tib. p.170). Nevertheless Dio Cassius is specific (58. 3. 9).
91. Tac. Ann. 4. 74; cp. Phaedrus, Fables, 3 prologue 33-44.
92. H. W. Bird 'L. Aelius Seianus and his Political Significance' Latomus 28 (1969) p.76.
93. Boddington, op. cit. p.13.
94. Tac. Ann. 4. 3.
95. Tac. Ann. 4. 41.
96. Tac. Ann. 5. 4.
97. Levick, Tib. p.173.
98. Dio Cass. 58. 3. 1-3.
99. Vell. Pat. 2. 127-8; Dio Cass. 57. 7. 2.
100. ILS 6044; R. Syme, 'Seianus on the Aventine' Hermes 84 (1956) p.257-66.
101. Tac. Ann. 5. 4. Garzetti (op. cit. p.59) suggests that Seianus may have encouraged these demonstrations.
102. /

102. Suet. Tib. 61; cp. Tac. Ann. 6. 3; Seager (op. cit. p.214) writes 'had plotted' - an error noted by Levick (Tib. p.278 note 129).
103. Jos. AJ 18. 181f; cp. Dio Cass. 65. 14. 1-2. Tacitus (Ann. 6. 47) refers to Satrius Secundus as 'coniurationis index'.
104. Suet. Gaius 8; 10.
105. Suet. Tib. 65; Tac. Ann. 6. 8.
Boddington (op. cit. p.3) regards their joint consulship as an indication that Seianus was heir apparent, noting that his two previous consulships during his principate were with Germanicus in AD. 18 and Drusus in AD. 21.
106. Tac. Ann. 2. 28.
107. Dio Cass. 58. 7. 4.
108. ILS 6124; Suet. Tib. 26.
109. Dio Cass. 58. 7. 5.
110. Dio Cass. 58. 8. 1; cp. Suet. Gaius 12.
111. Dio Cass. 58. 8. 4; cp. Suet. Tib. 26; Tac. Ann. 4. 38.
112. Dio Cass. 58. 9. 1.
113. Dio Cass. 58. 8. 4; cp. Suet. Tib. 54; 61; cp. F. B. Marsh, The Reign of Tiberius (Oxford 1931) p.194.
114. Dio Cass. 58. 8. 3. The accusers were now liable to face charges of malicious prosecution. (Tac. Ann. 6. 7; Dio Cassius 58. 10. 1). For the political significance of this affair see R. S. Rogers 'Lucius Arruntius' CP 26 (1931) p.31-45.
115. ILS 157 The date of his ruin was the 18th of October.
116. Dio Cassius 58. 8. 2 ἄλλως τε καὶ τῶν στρατιωτῶν πρὸς πάντα
ἐτοίμως ἀπακούσαι αὐτῷ ἔχοντων
Jos. AJ 18. 181; cp. Tac. Ann. 4. 2.
117. Dio Cass. 58. 13. 1; Suet. Tib. 48.
118. Small. 254.
119. /

119. For the importance of his role in the actions against Seianus see F. de Visscher, 'Macro, Prefet des Vigiles et ses cohortes contre la tyrannie de Séjan' *Mélanges André Piganiol* (Paris 1966) p.761-8.
120. Dio Cass. 58. 9. 5; cp. Philo, Leg. 37.
121. Dio Cass. 58. 9. 4.
122. Macro had informed Regulus and Laco of what was expected of them only on the previous night (Dio Cass. 58. 9. 3). Macro's status as a former prefect of the Vigiles was clearly an important factor in ensuring their cooperation. Whether the Lex Visellia, which in AD. 24 had granted members of the Vigiles full citizenship after six years' service in the corps, was quite as influential as de Visscher believes is much more doubtful.
123. Dio Cass. 58. 9. 6.
124. Tac. Ann. 4. 2.
125. Dio Cassius (58. 9. 5) suggests that Macro spoke of these rewards earlier when he dismissed Seianus' escort outside the temple of Apollo. This seems improbable. It was vital at that stage in the operation that the Praetorians should have no suspicions that a coup against Seianus was occurring. The order to return to the Viminal camp was unusual enough. The mention of rewards at this time would undoubtedly have alerted and alarmed any partisans of Seianus among the Praetorians. Once Macro was able to present the action against the prefect as successfully completed, then was surely the time to pre-empt any rescue attempt by offering rewards.
126. Dio Cass. 58. 10. 8.
127. Dio Cass. 58. 11. 1-3.
128. Dio Cass. 58. 11. 4.
129. Levick, Tib. p.178.
130. Dio Cass. 58. 11. 5.
131. In ILS 6044 Tiberius (if he is the speaker; cp. Levick, Tib. p.120) refers to himself 'debilis inutilis baculi comes'.
An inscription from Interamna in Umbria (ILS 157), dated to AD. 32 refers to Seianus as a 'perniciosissimus hostis'.
132. /

132. Dio Cass. 58. 11. 3; cp. Juv. Sat. 10. 66-7.
Seianus ducitur unco
spectandus, gaudent omnes
133. Dio Cass. 58. 10. 4.
134. Jos. AJ 18. 181.
135. Suet. Tib. 65.
136. Tac. Ann. 5. 8.
137. Fulcinius Trio, the consul, provoked his loyalist colleague Memmius Regulus into attacking him for involvement in the conspiracy. Both consuls survived the allegations (Tac. Ann. 5. 11). Less fortunate were three Roman knights who 'cecidere coniurationis crimine' (Tac. Ann. 6. 14).
138. Dio Cass. 54. 15. 2.
139. Dio Cass. 58. 6. 4; 58. 8. 2.
140. Dio Cass. 58. 14. 1.
141. Dio Cass. 76. 3. 3; Syme, Tac. p.753.
142. I remain unconvinced by the suggestion of A. N. Sherwin-White in his review of Syme's Tacitus (JRS (1959) p.142) that the charge of conspiracy refers, not to any new contrivings, but to the past actions of Seianus against the Julian house.
143. Dio Cass. 58. 8. 3.
144. Tac. Ann. 6. 8.
145. Durry (p.154) tries to play down the political aspect of the Seianus affair. Likewise Passerini who writes (p.272) 'Questa poca considerazione del nuovo funzionario fu condivisa anche da Tiberio: anzi fu la causa che permise a Seiano di portare tanto avanti indisturbato il suo folle sogno'.
146. Suet. Tib. 48; Dio Cass. 58. 9. 5; 58. 18. 2.
147. Publilius Syrus 181.

CHAPTER III : THE PRAETORIAN GUARD FROM THE DEATH OF SEIANUS TO
THE ASSASSINATION OF GAIUS

1. Tac. Ann. 5. 9; Dio Cass. 58. 11. 5; cp. Suet. Tib. 61.
For the dates see Braund 98.
2. Levick (Tib. p.203) writes of a 'witch-hunt'. Seager (op. cit. p.239-40) also argues for the acceptance of the fact of a reign of terror on the basis of the apparently random choice of victims. Marsh, on the other hand, (op. cit. p.220) suggests, largely because Tacitus mentions only a small number of trials, that 'the whole picture of the Tiberian terror is a product of imagination and rhetoric quite unsupported by the evidence'. Even he, however, is forced to admit that 'the fall of Sejanus was followed by a period of gloom'.

The number of those brought to trial during a purge bears little relation to the number of victims killed unlawfully. During the épuración in France between September 1944 and the end of 1949, 2071 persons were sentenced to death; of these only 768 were actually executed (D. Littlejohn, The Patriotic Traitors (London 1972) p.288). On the other hand, Adrien Tixier, a post-war minister of justice, estimated that there had been 105,000 summary executions between June 1944 and September 1945 (D. Pryce-Jones, Paris under the Third Reich. (London 1981) p.206).
3. Tac. Ann. 6. 38.
4. Tac. Ann. 6. 19; cp. Suet. Tib. 61.
5. Dio Cass. 58. 14. 1-5; Suet. Tib. 61.
6. Dio Cass. 58. 15. 1-2; Suet. Tib. 61.
7. Modern experience suggests that coups are rarely clinical affairs. The following extract from H. Hohne (The Order of the Death's Head, Hamburg 1966 p.92) serves to illustrate this point.

'Drafting death lists became a grisly sport for those in the know. Everyone had his own list; Goering drew one up; Wagner, the Gauleiter of Bavaria, drew one up; the S.S., the S.D. and Gestapo competed in their choice of candidates. Soon they were quarrelling over whether this man or that really merited shooting'.
8. Dio Cass. 58. 12. 2.
9. The Jews were another possible target. They had already been expelled once during Tiberius' principate for proselytising (Jos. A J 18. 81-85; Suet. Tib. 36; Dio Cass. 57. 18. 5a; cp. also W. A. Heidel 'Why were the Jews banished from Italy in 19 AD.?' AJP 41 (1920) p.38-47; E. M. Smallwood 'Some notes on /

on the Jews under Tiberius' Latomus 15 (1956) p.314-29). They were also intended victims of a pogrom by Seianus which had been forestalled by his death (Philo, In Flacc. 1; Leg. 159-161).

On the other hand neither Philo nor Josephus mentions even a small-scale pogrom in the aftermath of Seianus' death. Another factor militating against this theory is the distance of the Jewish quarter (Trastevere) from the Praetorian camp.

10. Dio Cass. 58. 9. 5; 58. 18. 2-3; cp. Suet. Tib. 48.
11. Tac. Ann. 6. 1; Suet. Tib. 72; cp. Tac. Ann. 4. 57-8; Suet. Tib. 40.
12. Tac. Ann. 6. 14.
13. cp. Garzetti, op. cit. p.73.
14. He asked the consul Regulus to travel south in order to ensure the safety of his journey to the city (Dio Cassius 58. 13. 3).
15. Tac. Ann. 6. 2; Dio Cass. 58. 17. 3-4.
16. Tac. Ann. 6. 15; Dio Cass. 58. 18. 5.
17. Dio Cass. 58. 18. 6. The resolution was a gesture of obeisance to Tiberius. His failure to attend meetings of the Senate meant that the measure was not put into effect.
18. Dio Cass. 58. 18. 5.
19. Tac. Ann. 6. 3 an potius discordiam et seditionem a satellite Seiani quaesitam, qua rudis animos nomine honoris ad corrumpendum militiae morem propelleret?
20. Dio Cass. 58. 9. 2.
21. Small. 254.
22. De Visscher, op. cit. (ch. 2 note 119) p.768.
 'En somme, tout dans nos sources et en particulier le régime spécial reconnu aux Vigiles, nous laisse l'impression d'une lutte sourde engagée entre Macro et Séjan longtemps avant la crise d'l'an 31: lutte sans aucun doute entretenue par l'astuce de Tibère, qui voyait en Macro comme une suprême défense centre les ambitions de Séjan'.
- H. Dessau (op. cit. vol. 2 p.75) suggests that Macro may have won the emperor's favour as a Praetorian tribune before moving to the prefecture of the Vigiles.
23. /

23. He was succeeded as prefect of the Vigiles by Graecinius Laco (Dio Cass. 58. 9. 3).
24. F de Visscher, 'L' amphithéâtre d'Alba Fucens et son fondateur Q. Naevius Macro, Préfet du Prétoire de Tibère'. Rend. Linc. ser. 8. 12 (1957) p.46.
A similar view is expressed by de Visscher in another article. 'La caduta di Seiano e il suo macchinatore Macrone' Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medioevale 2 (1960) p. 248.
25. Tac. Ann. 6. 48 qui ut deterior ad opprimendum Seianum delectus plura per scelera rem publicam conflictavisset? The words are attributed to Lucius Arruntius but there can be little doubt that they reflect Tacitus' own views.
26. Dio Cass. 58. 21. 3; 58, 24. 2; cp. Seager, op. cit. p.235.
27. Tac. Ann. 6. 45; Dio Cass. 58. 28. 4.
28. Tac. Ann. 6. 47.
29. Tac. Ann. 14. 60; 15. 57; Dio Cass. 62. 13. 3-4; 62. 27. 3.
30. Philo, Leg. 39-40; Suet. Gaius 12.
31. Philo, Leg. 35-38. cp. Tac. Ann. 6. 47; Dio Cass. 58. 28. 4.
32. C. Cichorius, Römische Studien (Berlin 1922) p.390f. On his association with Tiberius see Tac. Ann. 4. 20; Suet. Aug. 98; Tib. 14; Tib. 62; Dio Cass. 57. 15. 7.
33. Dio Cass. 58. 273.
Both Tacitus (Ann. 6. 45) and Dio Cassius (58. 28. 4) record the affair between Ennia and Gaius under the year AD. 37, but Levick (Tib. p.215) argues convincingly for an earlier date.
34. Levick, Tib. p.209-10.
35. Tac. Ann. 6. 29; 6. 38; Dio Cass. 58. 25. 2.
36. Tac. Ann. 6. 47; cp. 4. 34.
37. It remained a convenient charge with which to attack political enemies. Josephus (AJ 18. 250) tells us that Herod Antipas was accused in AD. 39 of conspiring with Seianus. We also know from Suetonius (Gaius 30) that Gaius attacked the senators 'ut Seiani clientis'; cp. Dio Cass. 59. 16. 4.
38. /

38. Tac. Ann. 6. 46; Suet. Tib. 62; Philo, Leg. 33-5.
39. Tacitus' account (Ann. 6. 47-8) of this episode is hardly satisfactory since he fails to tell us the nature of the treason involved. He sees the ruin of Lucius Arruntius, who had been consul in AD. 6, as Macro's main aim. In this he is followed by R. S. Rogers ('Arruntius', p.43-44) who views Arruntius as a bulwark of senatorial independence in the face of the increasing encroachments on that power by prefects like Seianus and Macro. Dio Cassius, on the other hand, (58. 27. 2f) identifies Gaius Domitius Ahenobarbus, consul in AD. 32 and husband of Agrippina, as the target of Macro's plotting. He is followed in this by P. I. Forsyth ('A Treason Case of AD. 37' Phoenix 23 (1969) p.204-7) who argues convincingly that Macro was acting to defend Gaius' interests. Levick (Tib. p.216-7) suggests that Macro was trying to discredit Ahenobarbus and Vibius Marsus not because they were plotting against Gaius but because they were rivals of his in influence over Gaius.
40. Philo, Leg. 41-51.
41. Tac. Ann. 6. 46 namque Macroni non abdita ambage occidentem ab eo deseri, orientem spectari exprobravit. cp. Dio Cass. 58. 28. 4.
42. Philo, Leg. 37.
43. Dio Cass. 58. 12. 7.
44. Jos. A J 18. 168-204; 228-237.
45. Tac. Ann. 6. 50; Suet. Tib. 73; Dio Cass. 58. 28. 5.
46. Suet. Tib. 73; Gaius 12.
47. Tac. Ann. 6. 50; Dio Cassius (58. 28. 3) mentions the piling of bed-clothes: in Suetonius' account a pillow is put over the emperor's face.
48. Tac. Ann. 6. 50. Charicles tamen labi spiritum nec ultra biduum duraturum Macroni firmavit.
49. Suet. Tib. 72 statimque latere convulso et, ut exaestuarat, afflatus aura in graviolem recidit morbum.
50. Suet. Tib. 73 ingravescente vi morbi retentus.
51. Tac. Ann. 6. 50; Suet. Tib. 73; Dio Cass. 58. 28. 2.
52. /

52. Suet. Tib. 73.
53. The pain in the side, the respiratory infection and the rise in body temperature are all classic symptoms of pneumonia. Cheyne-Stokes breathing, a loud wheezing which suddenly stops for a time before re-commencing, is common in patients during the final stages of pleurisy.
54. Tac. Ann. 6. 50.
55. The suggestion comes from J.P.V.D. Balsdon (The Emperor Gaius (Oxford 1934) p.25), although it does not appear to be supported by our sources.
56. Dio Cass. 59. 1. 3; cp. Suet. Tib. 76; Gaius 14.
57. Suet. Gaius 23.
58. Philo, Leg. 30-31; Suet. Gaius 23; Dio Cass. 59. 8. 1.
59. Philo, Leg. 52-58; in Flacc. 15.
60. Philo, Leg. 61; in Flacc. 14; Suet. Gaius 26; Dio Cass. 59. 10. 6,.
61. Small. 436
62. Philo, Leg. 175.
63. Philo, in Flacc. 9-11.
64. Dio Cass. 59. 11. 2.
65. Suet. Gaius 56; Dio Cass. 59. 25. 8.
66. Tac. Hist. 4. 68.
67. Dio Cass. 59. 2. 1; cp. Suet. Tib. 76.
68. RIC p.110 no.32; cp. A. A. Barrett, Caligula: The Corruption of Power (London 1989) p. 248-9.
69. Philo, in Flacc. 109; Flaccus' support for Tiberius Gemellus, his involvement in the prosecution of Agrippina and his friendship with Macro combined to render him liable to charges of treason. The original charge against him, however, may have been the lesser one of maladministration because of his role in permitting a series of anti-Jewish actions by the Alexandrian 'nationalist' faction.

70. Philo, in Flacc. 157; 161.
71. Philo, in Flacc. 185-90. He does not specifically name Praetorians as Flaccus' killers but, since the order for the execution came directly from the emperor himself, it seems probable that a reliable centurion was sent from Rome to kill the former prefect. Flaccus certainly guessed the purpose of his executioners when they were still some distance off which suggests that they were in uniform.
72. There has been considerable speculation about the nature of the illness which Gaius suffered during the autumn of AD. 37 and whether his character changed at that time from good to evil as Philo claims (Leg. 22). Philo himself suggests (Leg. 14) that the transformation came about as a result of over-indulgence by the new emperor in both food and sexual activities. We know, however, that even during Tiberius' principate the vices of Gaius were evident (Philo, Leg. 34; in Flacc. 12; Suet. Gaius 11) though he was adept at concealing the worst of them (Tac. Ann. 6. 20: Suet. Gaius 10).
- Modern commentators have sought a medical or psychological explanation for Gaius' deviant behaviour. T. S. Jerome (Aspects of the Study of Roman History (London 1923) p.381) suggests that Gaius' excesses may have been the result of alcoholism. J.P.V.D. Balsdon (op. cit. p.36) favours a nervous breakdown. J. Lucas ('Un empereur psychopathe: Contribution à la psychologie du Caligula de Suétone') Ant. Class. 36 (1967) p.159-89) inclines to the view that Gaius was mentally ill. R. S. Katz ('The Illness of Caligula' CW 65 (1972) p.223-5) argues that Gaius was the victim of hyperthyroidism, a glandular disorder. Finally, V. Massaro and I. Montgomery ('Gaius - Mad, Bad, Ill or all three?' Latomus 36 (1978) p.894-9) regard Gaius' illness as a mixture of anxiety and mania.
- It may, however, be best to follow M. P. Charlesworth (CAH Vol. 10 p.665-6) and admit that the precise nature of Gaius' illness or disorder may never be determined.
73. Dio Cass. 59. 5. 5; Philo, Leg. 78-9; 93f.
74. Jos. A J 19. 42.
75. Dio Cass. 55. 10. 2-3; 55. 10. 7.
76. Dio Cass. 55. 11. 2; Suetonius (Gaius 24) tells us that whenever Gaius took an oath before the Praetorians, he did so by the godhead of Drusilla.
77. Dio Cass. 59. 13. 4.
78. Suet. Gaius 26.
79. /

79. Jos. A J 19. 5-6; Sen. De Brev. Vit. 18. 5-6; Suet. Gaius 19; Dio Cass. 59. 17. 1-11.

The emperor crossed this bridge, which was three and a half Roman miles long, on two consecutive days, on the second of which, dressed in Alexander the Great's breastplate, in a chariot pulled by two famous racehorses, he led the entire Praetorian corps.

The motivation for this spectacle puzzled ancient historians as much as their modern counterparts. Josephus and Seneca allude to it as an example of Gaius' madness. Suetonius is more circumspect although the reasons which he puts forward for the building of the bridge serve only to convince us of Gaius' instability. Balsdon (op. cit. p.52) believes that the project was staged to impress Darius, the son of the Parthian king who, as a hostage, accompanied Gaius during the parade on the second day. Garzetti (op. cit. p.91) on the other hand, thinks that the entire episode can 'be reconciled perfectly with Gaius' pretensions to omnipotence'.

80. Suet. Gaius 29.

81. Jos. A J 19. 38-43.

82. Balsdon op. cit. p.60f; 220-221.

83. Suet. Gaius 43.

84. Suet. Gaius 45.

85. It seems certain that sometime in AD. 39 Gaius raised in the Senate the spectre of "Seianism" (Jos. A J 18. 250; Suet Gaius 30; cp. Dio Cass. 59. 16. 4). The close links between Seianus and Gaetulicus were well known but the latter had defended himself vigorously and successfully when accused in AD. 34 because of these links (Tac. Ann. 5. 8-9; 6. 30). The 'nefaria consilia' for which he was executed (G. Henzen, Acta Fratrum Arvalium (Berlin 1874) p.49; cp. Dio Cassius 59. 22. 5) probably relate to a plan to murder the emperor and replace him with Lepidus who had already been designated by Gaius as his successor (Dio Cass. 59. 22. 6-7; Sen. Ep. 4. 7; Suet. Gaius 24. 32).

86. Suet. Gaius 49. Gaius was, in fact, disappointed that the Senate did not vote him divine honours (Dio Cass. 59. 25. 5).

87. Dio Cass. 59. 25. 56-6; cp. Jos. A J 19. 17-23.

88. Jos. A J 19. 32-6; Dio Cass. 59. 26. 4; Suet. Gaius 16.

89. Suet. Gaius 40.

90. /

90. Jos. A J 19. 24-6; Dio Cass. 59. 28. 11.
91. For the growing antagonism of the general populace towards Gaius see Yavetz, op. cit. p.116-8.
92. Suet. Gaius 55.
93. Suet. Gaius 25.
94. Suet. Gaius 55; cp. 36.
95. Garzetti, op. cit. p.101.
96. Dio Cass. 59. 26. 3.
97. Dio Cass. 59. 25. 7.
98. Suet. Gaius 56; Dio Cass. 59. 25. 8.
99. Jos. A J 19. 14.
100. Tac. Ann. 1. 32.
101. Sen. Dial. 2. 18 sermo non pro manu erat, languidus sono et, ni facta nosses, suspectior; cp. Auson. De. Caes. 4. 4.
102. Jos. A J 19. 29-31; Sen. Const. Sap. 18. 3; Suet. Gaius 56; Dio Cass. 59. 29. 2.
103. Jos. A J 19. 34-6; 19. 40-1; 19. 71.
104. Jos. A J 19. 37-47; Dio Cass. 59. 29. 1; Durry (p.181-2) views Chaerea as the instrument of Clemens; cp. Barrett, op. cit. p.162 'there is the hint that Chaerea was perhaps the dupe of more powerful figures who, for the most part, remain in the background'.
105. As many as 4 other tribunes may have been involved in the conspiracy. Papinius, who was perhaps related to the Sextus Papinius whom Seneca (De Ira 3. 18. 3; cp. Dio Cass. 59. 25. 56) tells us was killed on Caligula's orders, was approached by Chaerea at the same time as Clemens (Jos. A J 19. 37; 19. 41). Cornelius Sabinus responded enthusiastically to Chaerea's overtures (Jos. A J 19. 46-8; Dio Cass. 59. 29. 1). Julius Lupus, the murderer of Caesonia and her baby, is called a military tribune by Josephus (Jos A J 19. 190.). Suetonius (Gaius 59) does not mention his name but refers to him as a centurion. It is also possible that Aquila whose rank is not mentioned was a Praetorian tribune (Jos. A J 19. 110).

106. Jos. A J 19. 48-60. Vinicianus was not the only champion of the Senate. Josephus (Jos. A J 19. 17) also mentions a circle of conspirators headed by Aemilius Regulus of Cordoba, while Tacitus (Ann. 11. 1) describes Valerius Asiaticus as 'praecipuum auctorem interficiendi C. Caesaris. We should not ignore the involvement of the powerful imperial freedman Callistus (Jos. A J 19. 64-69; Dio Cass. 59. 29. 1; cp. Tac. Ann. 11. 29).
107. Jos. A J 19. 60-62; 19. 91-92; Dio Cass. 59. 29. 1. On the other hand, Tacitus (Hist. 3. 68) speaks of 'occultae insidiae'. We should note the suggestion of D. Timpe (Untersuchungen zur Kontinuität des frühen Prinzipats (Wiesbaden 1963) p.80-1) that Vinicianus was eager to attract a large constituency to support his bid for the principate.
108. Jos. A J 19. 78-9.
109. Jos. A J 19. 80-83; Philo Leg. 250; 338. It seems highly improbable that Gaius was considering such a dangerous voyage in the middle of winter.
110. Jos. A J 19. 77; Suet. Gaius 56; Dio Cass. 59. 29. 5; cp. Barrett, op. cit. p.169-171.
111. Jos. A J 19. 98-100.
112. Suet. Gaius 58; Dio Cass. 59. 29. 6.
113. Jos. A J 19. 104.
114. Suet. Gaius 58.
115. Suetonius (Gaius 58) writes of 30 wounds; Dio Cassius (59. 29. 7) indulges his taste for the macabre:
116. Jos. A J 19. 105-10.
117. Jos. A J 19. 122-26. Suet. Gaius 55; 58; Dio Cass. 59. 30 lb. Dio Cassius (60. 28. 2) also tells us that Sabinus was later rescued from death in the amphitheatre by Messalina who was his lover.
118. Dio Cass. 59. 30. 2; cp. Jos. A J 19. 214.
119. Jos. A J 19. 138-52.
120. Jos. A J 19. 153-56; cp. Barrett op. cit. p.166 'This account, which stresses the great perils to which Vinicianus was supposedly exposed, may cover the reality that he, in fact, sought Clemens' protection at the first sign of danger.
121. /

121. Jos. A J 19. 161.

122. Josephus (Jos. A J 19. 251-2) mentions the claims of Marcus Vinicius and Valerius Asiaticus. It is generally felt that Vinicianus' opposition to Asiaticus was motivated by his own ambitions: a third candidate proposed was Galba, the future emperor (Suet. Galba 7): cp. M. Swan 'Josephus A J XIX, 251-252. Opposition to Gaius and Claudius' AJP 91 (1970) p.149-64.

123. Dio Cass. 58. 12. 2.

124. Josephus' account (Jos. A J 19. 214-26) of the reaction of the Praetorians is rather confused. It is not, however, the 'inconsistent pastiche of two different versions' which Barrett condemns (op. cit. p.172-3).

The confusion is caused largely through the failure of Josephus to distinguish clearly between the different responses of the Praetorians in the camp and those on duty at the palace. I suggest that, when news of Gaius' assassination reached the camp, the Praetorians there held an assembly at which they decided to support the principle of a continuing principate and to give their backing to Claudius. A detachment of considerable size was then despatched to the palace to find Claudius. Meanwhile some of the cohort which was on duty at the palace at the time of Gaius' murder had also decided to demand the elevation of Claudius. It is unclear whether they reached the conclusion before or after Gratus found Claudius hiding in the Hermaeum. This group was escorting Claudius back to the Praetorian camp when they met the detachment hurrying from the camp towards the palace. Claudius was then taken to the camp where he spent the night.

125. C. Ehrhardt ('Messalina and the succession to Claudius' Antichthon 12 (1978) p.52) certainly understates Claudius' dynastic claims.

126. It seems probable that he suffered from cerebral palsy (B. Levick, Claudius (London 1990) p.200 note 7).

127. Jos. A J 19. 217; 19. 223; Dio Cass. 60. 1. 3.

CHAPTER IV : THE PRAETORIAN GUARD OF CLAUDIUS

1. Jos. A J 19. 190. In the account of Suetonius (Gaius 59) it is a centurion who carries out the killing.
2. Jos. A J 19. 191. This relationship perhaps explains Lupus' preferment.
3. Jos. A J 19. 44-5; 19. 155-6; Dio Cass. 59. 30. 3; cp. V. Scramuzza, The Emperor Claudius (Cambridge, Mass. 1940) p.57 'The Prefect of the Guard was acting hand in glove with the conspirators'.
4. Jos. A J 19. 192.
5. Jos. A J 19. 194.
6. Jos. A J 19. 199-200; cp. Suet. Gaius 58; Dio Cass. 59. 29. 7.
7. The Curia was also deemed inappropriate because of its Julian associations. Jos. A J 19. 158; BJ 2. 205; Suet. Gaius 60; Dio Cass. 60. 1. 1.
8. Dio Cass. 59. 30. 3.
9. Jos. A J 19. 161.
10. Jos. A J 19. 184. Sentius compares Chaerea to Brutus and Cassius.
11. Jos. A J 19. 185. Trebellius Maximus smashes Sentius' ring which had a stone with an image of Gaius on it.
12. Jos. A J 19. 167f.; Suet. Gaius 60; Cl. 10; Dio Cass. 60. 1. 1.
13. Jos. A J 19. 186: watchword; A J 19. 189: Chaerea; A J 19. 188; BJ 2. 205; Suet. Cl. 10: urban cohorts. Since the urban cohorts were normally under the command of the senatorial praefectus urbi, we should perhaps not be surprised by their commitment at this time to the senatorial cause.
14. Balsdon (op. cit. p.105) calls his speech 'a Ciceronian harangue'; cp. Syme (1958) p.257.
15. Jos. A J 19. 70f; 19. 186f.
16. A. Momigliano, Claudius: The Emperor and His Achievement (New York 1961) p.21.
17. /

17. Jos. A J 19. 227-8; Grant, AOC p.149.
18. Sen. Clem. 1. 4. 3.
19. Jos. A J 19. 160.
20. Jos. A J 19. 158.
21. Jos. A J 19. 160; cp. 19. 189.
22. Jos. A J 19. 162; cp. Scramuzza, op. cit. p.56 'Clearly the Praetorian decision to nominate Claudius did not follow his discovery but preceded it'.
23. Jos. A J 19. 224.
24. Balsdon op. cit. p.105.
25. Jos. A J 19. 160.
26. Scramuzza, op. cit. p.54 'this representative body of Italian bourgeoisie'.
27. Jos. A J 19. 163; cp. Dio Cass. 60. 1. 3a.
28. Jos. A J 19. 217; 19. 223; Suet. Cl. 7.
29. Suet. Tib. 76; Dio Cass. 59. 2. 1.
30. Jos. A J 19. 165; 19. 225.
31. Suet. Cl. 8.
32. Suet. Cl. 6; Gaius 15; Dio Cass. 59. 6. 6; cp. Momigliano, op. cit. p.2.
33. A. von Domaszewski, Geschichte der römischen Kaizer 1, (Leipzig 1914) p.23: Claudius as figurehead.
SEHRE² p.73: Praetorian dictatorship. This view is rightly dismissed by Durry p.367 'mais il y aurait forte exagération à dire qu'à dater de Claude s'installa une dictature des pretoriens'.
34. Jos. A J 19. 164; BJ .2. 211; cp. Pliny HN pref. 17; Tac. Ann. 13. 3; Suet. Cl. 41.
35. cp. J. B. Campbell, The Emperor and the Roman Army 31 BC. - AD. 235 (Oxford 1984) p.81 'it is clear that Claudius was not the helpless puppet of the troops'.
36. /

36. Levick, Claud. p.37-8.
37. Jos. A J 19. 267.
38. Levick, Claud. p.35 'Circumstantial evidence suggests Claudius' complicity'.
39. Jos. A J 19. 216; Suet. Cl. 10; Dio Cass. 60. 1. 2.
40. Jos. A J 19. 217; According to Aurelius Victor (De. Caes. 3. 15) it was a centurion of the Guard from Epirus who discovered Claudius lurking in the palace.
41. Levick, Claud. p.35.
42. Jos. A J 19. 216; Suet. Cl. 10.
43. Jos. A J 19. 219.
44. Jos. A J 19. 220.
45. Jos. A J 19. 222.
46. Jos. A J 19. 221; Suet. Cl. 10.
47. Jos. A J 19. 223, Josephus uses the term *τὸ δημόσιον*. In A J 13. 265-6 and 16. 164, the same term refers to the public treasury. But if this is taken to mean the aerarium in the temple of Saturn then it was just below the Capitol where the Senate was meeting.
48. Dio Cass. 60. 1. 3.
49. Jos. A J 19. 226; B J 2. 206; Suet. Cl. 10; Dio Cass. 60. 1. 3.
50. Jos. A J 19. 234; Suet. Cl. 10; Dio Cass. 60. 1. 4. Veranius was later, in AD 58, governor of Britain where he died that same year (Tac. Agr. 14; Ann. 14. 29).
51. Jos. A J 19. 234.
52. Jos. A J 19. 229-31.
53. Jos. A J 19. 234-5.
54. Garzetti, op. cit. p.106 'The solidarity of interest among heterogeneous elements lasted a few hours after the aim of eliminating Gaius had been achieved'.
55. /

55. Jos. A J 19. 246; B J 2. 208.
56. Jos. A J 19. 236-44; B J 2. 206-13; Dio Cass. 60. 8. 2;
cp. Balsdon, op. cit. p.105 'ready as ever to fish in troubled waters.'
57. The exact role which Agrippa played in these events is open to question (Scramuzza, op. cit. p.11-18; Garzetti, op. cit. p.107). According to Josephus' Jewish War he was summoned by Claudius and, after weighing up the likely outcome of the struggle between the Praetorian and senatorial forces, went to the camp. He then took two separate messages from Claudius to the Senate before, finally, saving the leaders of the senatorial party from being murdered by angry Praetorians after the collapse of the resistance to Claudius' elevation. In all of this he is clearly an agent, albeit an important one, obeying Claudius' orders.

In book 19 of Jewish Antiquities which was written 20 years later, Josephus portrays Claudius as a shambling neurotic, saved from collapse by the masterly advice and shrewd diplomatic skills of Agrippa. In this version Agrippa is a valued consultant whose advice is sought by both sides and whose perception of the disarray on the senatorial side finally determines the tone of Claudius' reply.
58. Suet. Cl. 10; Josephus (A J 19. 247) claims the donative was 5000 drachmas (20,000 sesterces).
59. Scramuzza, op. cit. p.62.
60. Garzetti, op. cit. p.108.
61. Campbell, op. cit. p.166-7.
62. Suet. Cl. 10 primus Caesarum fidem militis etiam praemio pigneratus.
63. Balsdon, op. cit. p.105.
64. E. Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Emperor (London 1776) vol. 1, ch. 3. 2.
65. Durry p.268-73; Passerini p.115-22.

Nero matched Claudius' donative (Tac. Ann. 12. 69; Dio Cass. 61. 3. 1), while one of the causes of Galba's fall was his failure to pay the massive donative (Plut. Galba 2) promised on his behalf by Nymphidius Sabinus, the Praetorian prefect (Tac. Hist. 1. 5; Plut. Galba 18; Suet. Galba 16; Dio Cass. 63. 3. 3.)
66. Hor. Epist. 2. 2. 26-33; Plut. Luc. 37.
67. /

67. Plut. Pom. 45.
68. App. B C 4. 100; Plut. Brut. 44.
69. Despite his earlier excesses when he offered his troops 20,000 sesterces after the second capture of Rome (App. BC. 3. 94).
The cost of Claudius' donative to the Praetorians has been calculated at 135 million sesterces (Balsdon, op. cit. p.188). If, as Josephus (A J 19. 247) claims, a similar grant was promised to the rest of the army, the total cost will have been around 833 million sesterces (Campbell, op. cit. p.167-8).
70. Jos. A J 19. 248. The precise location of this temple is unclear cp. Ov. Fast. 4. 621-2; Dio Cass. 45. 17. 2; 47. 40. 2.
71. Jos. A J 19. 249.
72. T. P. Wiseman ('Calpurnius Siculus and the Claudian Civil War' J R S 72 (1982) p.67) argues against the existence of a Julio-Claudian dynasty. He suggests that there was a Julian dynasty and that Claudius did not belong to it. This view is rightly refuted by M. T. Griffin (Nero: The End of a Dynasty (London 1984) p.259 note 81; cp. Scramuzza, op. cit. p.55.
73. See ch. 3 note 122.
74. Jos. A J 19. 251; Cp. R. Syme 'Missing Persons III) Historia II (1962) p.147-9.
75. Dio Cassius (59. 30. 2) claims that Asiaticus calmed the Praetorians with the words 'ἐγὼ αὐτὸν ἰπλεκτόναι'. Josephus (A J 19. 159) mentions the same statement, though he alleges Asiaticus made it at a meeting in the Forum.
76. Sen. Constant. 18. 2.
77. Tac. Ann. 11. 1.
78. Jos. A J 19. 52-9; 153-4.
79. Dio Cass. 60. 15. 1.
80. Jos. A J 19. 253.
81. Jos. A J 19. 254.
82. Jos. A J 19. 258.
83. /

83. Jos. B J 2. 211. .
84. Jos. B J 2. 212; Dio Cass. 60. 1. 4.
85. Jos. A J 19. 261. What exactly Josephus means by the term *δοκιμασία* is not clear.
86. Jos. A J 19. 263.
87. Jos. A J 19. 264.
88. Jos. A J 19. 265; B J 2. 213.
89. Jos. A J 19. 266.
90. Jos. A J 19. 267.
91. Jos. A J 19. 268; Suet. Cl. 11; Dio Cass. 60. 3. 4.
92. Jos. A J 19. 269-71.
93. Jos. A J 19. 273; Dio Cass. 60. 3. 5.
The example of the conspirators was not, however, forgotten:
cp. Durry p.368 'Chareas avait fait école'.
94. Syme, Tac. p.257.
95. RIC p.122 no.7; RIC p.122 no.12.
It is probable that these issues were used to pay the donative (Campbell, op. cit. p.167) but coins being the legend IMPER. RECEPT. continued to be issued till AD. 46-7, while those inscribed PRAETOR. RECEPT. were issued until AD. 44-5.
96. Campbell, op. cit. p.36. Others, however, have misinterpreted Claudius' motives. Grant (AOC p.151) writes, 'No other emperor, before or after Claudius, blatantly advertised that he owed the Praetorians his throne'. Momigliano (op. cit. p.55) holds a similar view, 'Claudius never forgot that he owed his throne to the Praetorians: indeed he acknowledged the fact on two well-known coins'. H. V. Instinsky ('Kaiser Claudius und die Pratorianer' Hamburger Beitrag zur Numismatik vol. 2 (1952-3) p.7-8) goes even further with his suggestion that the legend PRAETOR. RECEPT. should be read as PRAETORIO RECEPTUS, referring to Claudius, rather than as PRAETORIANI RECEPTI IN FIDEM.
97. We know that Claudius utilised the temple of Fides when handing out diplomas of demobilisation to auxiliary veterans. (ILS 1956).
98. /

98. Small. 368 (= Braund 569).
99. Campbell, op. cit. p.283.
100. Dio Cass. 60. 12. 4.
101. Suet. Cl. 21; Dio Cass. 60. 17. 9.
102. It is interesting to compare the attitude of Hitler to the ceremonies on the anniversary of the putsch of November the 8th and 9th 1923. A. Bullock. Hitler: A Study in Tyranny (London 1954) p.106. 'Year after year, even after the outbreak of war, he went back to the Bürgerbrau Keller in Munich on 8 November and to the Feldherrnhalle, the War Memorial on the Odeonsplatz, to renew the memory of what had happened there on that grey November morning in 1923. Regularly each year he spoke to the Nazi Old Guard (the Alte Kämpfer) in the Bürgerbrau Keller and the next morning on the Odeonsplatz solemnly recalled the martyrs of the movement who died for their faith.'
103. Suet. Cl. 27.
104. Tac. Ann. 12. 36.
105. Tac. Ann. 12. 41.
106. Tac. Ann. 11. 35; Suet. Cl. 26.
107. F. Millar, 'Emperors at Work' JRS (1967) p.9-19.
108. Dio Cass. 60. 4. 3; 60. 6. 1; 60. 13. 2; Suet. Cl. 12. This did not stop them pelting Claudius with pieces of break in the Forum during a corn shortage. (Suet. Cl. 18).
109. F. Millar, The Emperor in the Roman World (London 1977) p.17.
110. For modern parallels see G. H. Stein, The Waffen SS; Hitler's Elite Guard at War 1939 - 1945 (New York 1966) p.5 'Visitors now had to pass through three rings of S.S. guards to reach the Chancellor; and guests at Hitler's table were served by incongruously athletic-looking waiters wearing neat white jackets in place of their usual black blouses. When Hitler ventured out, his car was always accompanied by a number of open black limousines filled with armed young giants in full-dress S.S. uniforms'. R. Payne, The Rise and Fall of Stalin (London 1965) p.394. 'The country estates were ringed by guards and every known electronic device was used to prevent unauthorised persons from the magic circle in which he lived ... Once he was in power he never walked through the streets of Moscow for he had a morbid fear of assassination. The inevitable result was that he became the prisoner of his private guard.'

111. Suet. Cl. 40.
112. Tac. Ann. 11. 22; Suet. Cl. 13; Dio Cass. 60. 18. 4.
113. Suet. Cl. 35; cp. Scramuzza, op. cit. p.48.
114. Suet. Cl. 35.
115. Suet. Cl. 12; Dio Cass. 60. 23. 2.
116. Suet. Cl. 25.
117. Suet. Cl. 42; Dio Cass. 60. 16. 7; cp. Levick, Claud. p.60.
118. Suet. Cl. 29. According to Suetonius 35 senators and 300 equites perished during Claudius' principate.
119. Suet. Cl. 29; Dio Cass. 60. 29. 6a. For the high honours previously granted to Pompeius see Dio Cass. 60. 5. 7-9; 60. 21. 5; 60. 23. 1; 60. 25. 8.
120. Tac. Ann. 12. 22 in Lolliam mittitur tribunus a quo ad mortem adigeretur.
121. Wiseman (n.72) p.65-66 'the intimidating physical presence of soldiers and their readiness to use their weapons on civilians of even the highest rank, made it easy to portray the Rome of Claudius as in a permanent state of potential war'.
122. Tac. Ann. 11. 1. His accuser was Sosibius, Britannicus' tutor, who was acting at the instigation of Messalina.
123. Tac. Ann. 11. 2.
124. Tac. Ann. 11. 1 cp. Scramuzza, op. cit. p.97 'that no less a person than the Praetorian Prefect should be in charge of these operations seems absurd against a man charged simply with adultery'.
125. Dio Cass. 60. 29. 5-6.
126. Tac. Ann. 11. 4.
127. Tac. Ann. 13. 18.
128. Suet. Cl. 21; Dio Cass. 60. 17. 9; 60. 33. 3.
129. Tac. Ann. 12. 36.
130. /

130. Suet. Cl. 21.
131. Suet. Cl. 21.
132. Pliny, H N 36. 124; Tac. Ann. 12. 56; Suet. Cl. 21;
Dio Cassius 60. 11. 5.
133. Suet. Jul. 44; Cl. 20.
134. Tacitus (Ann. 12. 56) writes of 19,000 combatants: Suetonius
(Cl. 21) mentions 12 ships on each side; Dio Cassius (60. 33. 3)
increases this to 50 ships on each side. The Monumentum
Ancyranum speaks of 30 triremes or biremes with smaller vessels
and around 3000 combatants as distinct from rowers.
135. Tac. Ann. 12. 56; Dio Cass. 60. 33. 3.
136. Tac. Ann. 12. 57; Suet. Cl. 21; Dio Cass. 60. 33. 4.
137. Scramuzza, op. cit. p.210.
138. Suet. Cl. 17.
139. Dio Cass. 60. 21. 2.
140. Dio Cass. 60. 23. 2. Grant (AOC p.154) wrongly identifies
the prefect as Rufrius Crispinus.
141. Dio Cass. 60. 18. 3; 60. 21. 2; 60. 23. 1.
142. Dio Cass. 60. 21. 4; 60. 22. 1-2; Suet. Cl. 17.
143. Dio Cass. 60. 23. 2-3.
144. Small 283 (= Braund 518). He went on to become the tribune
of the 3rd Praetorian cohort. It is tempting to assume that
he was a member of the same family as Vettius Valens, the
equestrian who was a medical adviser to Messalina (Pliny, H N
29. 8; 29. 20) and who was arrested and executed in the
aftermath of her 'marriage' to Silius (Tac. Ann. 11. 31; 11. 35),
but I do not believe that we can think of their relationship as
close as, for example, father and son. Certainly the career of
the soldier continues after the demise of the doctor.
145. Dio Cass. 60. 18. 3.
146. Sen. Apocol. 13. 5.
147. /

147. Crispinus: Tac. Ann. 11. 1; 11. 4; 16. 7.
Geta: Tac. Ann. 11. 31.
148. Tac. Ann. 11. 27; Suet. Cl. 26; Dio Cass. 60. 31. 3-4.
149. Although Tacitus (Ann. 11. 12) presents Messalina's ruin as the result of her obsessive passion for Silius (cp. Juv. Sat. 10. 329-33), it is probable that Silius was not a passive victim but had political aims of his own. (A Mehl, Tacitus über Kaiser Claudius: Die Ereignisse am Hof. Stud. et Testimonia antiqua 16 (Munich 1974) p.62).

The view that the wedding celebration was a form of Bacchic rite was suggested by J. Colin ('Les Vendanges Dionysiaques et la légende de Messaline' Études Classiques 24 (1956) p.25-39).
150. Levick, Claud. p.64-7.
151. Among those executed after the suppression of the coup were Decrius Calpurnianus, the prefect of the Vigiles, and Sulpicius Rufus, procurator of the school of gladiators, (Tac. Ann. 11. 35).
152. Tac. Ann. 11. 31; 11. 33.
153. Tac. Ann. 11. 32; Dio Cass. 60. 31. 5.
154. Tac. Ann. 11. 35; Suet. Cl. 26.
155. Tac. Ann. 11. 35.
156. Tac. Ann. 11. 36; Dio Cass. 60. 31. 5.
157. Tac. Ann. 11. 37 ac ni caedem eius Narcissus properavisset, verterat perniciem in accusatorem.
158. Tac. Ann. 11. 37.
159. Tac. Ann. 11. 37-8; Griffin, (Nero, p.29) wrongly writes 'Messalina took her own life.'
160. Tac. Ann. 11. 38.
161. Small. 383 (= Braund 590).
162. Tac. Ann. 12. 8; Suet. Cl. 29; Dio Cass. 60. 31. 6.
163. His father was Gaius Domitius Ahenobarbus whom Suetonius (Nero 5) describes as 'omni parte vitae detestabilis'.
Nero himself was born on December the 15th AD. 37 (Suet. Nero 6).
164. /

164. Tacitus (Ann. 13. 15) tells us that he was born on the 12th of February AD. 41. Suetonius (Cl. 27) wrongly places his birth in AD. 42. The decisive evidence is provided by a coin from Alexandria (Small. 98a = Braund 209).
165. Tac. Ann. 12. 9.
166. Tac. Ann. 12. 9; Jos. A J 20. 150; Dio Cass. 60. 32. 2.
167. Tac. Ann. 12. 26; Jos. A J 20. 150; Suet. Nero 7 (where his age is wrongly given as 10 instead of 12); Dio Cass. 60. 33. 2².
168. Suet. Nero 7; Tac. Ann. 12. 41.
169. Tac. Ann. 12. 41.
170. Tac. Ann. 12. 42. I am not convinced by the suggestion of Wiseman (op. cit. p.66 note 83) that line 48 of the first eclogue of Calpurnius Siculus (in sua vesanos torquebit viscera morsus' refers to this factionalism.
171. Tac. Ann. 12. 42; Dio Cass. 60. 32. 6a.
172. Small. 383; Tac. Ann. 16. 7; 13. 45.
173. Tac. Ann. 12. 42.
174. ILS 1321 (= Small. 259 = Braund 461).
175. Tac. Ann. 13. 20.
176. Tac. Ann. 12. 69; Suet. Cl. 45; Dio Cass. 60. 34. 3.
177. Suetonius (Cl. 43) suggests that Agrippina's actions were prompted by the fact that Claudius was showing signs of regret over his marriage and adoption of Nero and was planning a reconciliation with Britannicus. cp. Dio Cass. 60. 34. 1.
 For details of the alleged poisoning see Tac. Ann. 12. 66-7; Suet. Cl. 44; Sen. Apocol. 2. 2; Jos. A J 20. 151; Dio Cass. 60. 34. 2-3.
 Scramuzza (op. cit. p.93) notes that 'all references to the fatal mushrooms can be traced to Pliny the Elder' (HN 2. 92; 11. 189; 22. 92). Pliny's story is also doubted by G. Bagnani, 'The Case of the Poisoned Mushrooms', Phoenix 1 (1946-7) p.14-9; cp. R. A. Pack, 'Seneca's Evidence on the Deaths of Claudius and Narcissus' CW 36 (1942-3) p.150-1.
178. /

178. Tac. Ann. 12. 64; Dio Cass. 60. 35. 1.
179. Tac. Ann. 12. 68; The announcements of the deaths of both Augustus and Tiberius had been similarly delayed.
180. Tac. Ann. 12. 69.
181. According to Tacitus (Ann. 12. 68) he was being detained, under the guise of comfort, by Agrippina personally.
182. Tac. Ann. 12. 69; Suet. Nero 8; Jos. A J 20. 152; Dio Cass. 61. 3. 1.

CHAPTER V : THE PRAETORIAN GUARD OF NERO

1. Tac. Ann. 12. 69; Suet. Nero 8; Dio Cass. 61. 3. 1;
Jos. A J 20. 152.
2. Tac. Ann. 14. 7; Suet. Gaius 4; cp. Yavetz, op. cit. p.121
'To the Young Octavius Antony had once said that he was a lad
(puer) 'qui omnia nomini debes'; and of the youthful Nero it
may clearly be said that omnia Germanico debuit'.
3. Dio Cass. 61. 3. 1.
4. Tac. Ann. 15. 72; Suet. Nero 10; Dio Cass. 61. 14. 3;
62. 27.4; BMC p.218 no.122 plate 41. 5.
5. Tac. Ann. 15. 67; Plut. Galba 14. 2; Dio Cass. 62. 24. 1-2.
6. ILS 1321; W. C. McDermott, 'Sextus Afranius Burrus'
Latomus 8 (1949) p.233.
7. The exact nature of the relationship between Burrus and Seneca
has been the subject of much debate. Tacitus' concept of a
partnership has been accepted by, among others, R. Waltz who
suggests (Vie de Sénèque, (Paris 1909) p.238) that Burrus was
leader of the equites while Seneca led the senatorial class.
This view has been challenged by H. de la Ville de Mirmont
'Afranius Burrhus' Rev. Phil. 34 (1910) p.100 'Sénèque est la
tête, Burrhus n'est que le bras'.

McDermott (op. cit. p.249-50) is firmly of the opinion that
Burrus not only owed his appointment in AD. 51 to Seneca's
influence but 'was never more than a subordinate of Seneca' and
that 'their concord can therefore be better explained as the
association of a dominant leader and a faithful follower'.

Syme (Tac. p.610) argues that as a result of Tacitus' sympathy
for those from Narbonese Gaul and Spain 'the prefect of the
Guard is magnified to be a worthy partner (of Seneca),
embellished in performance and repute.'

I find the order in which Tacitus presents them of interest;
Burrus first at 13. 2; 13. 6; 13. 14; 14. 7. And surely
14. 52, 'altero velut duce amoto' is an indication that Burrus
was the dominant figure.

Griffin (Nero p.72) has a well-balanced view of the relationship.

'Burrus was also an amicus principis but his influence derived
from his official position as Praetorian prefect. Different in
personality as well as position, the two amici exercised their
influence in a co-operative but contrasting manner'.

8. She is blamed by Tacitus (Ann. 13. 1) for the deaths at the beginning of the reign of Narcissus and M. Junius Silanus. cp. Dio Cass. 61. 6. 4-5.
9. Tac. Ann. 13. 2; Suet. Nero 9.
10. Tac. Ann. 13. 18.
11. Tac. Ann. 13. 2; Nero also declared in a speech to the Senate, possibly written by Seneca, that he was opposed to the undue influence of freedmen (Tac. Ann. 13. 4).
12. Tac. Ann. 13. 2; Dio Cass. 61. 3. 3. A serious political incident was only narrowly averted when, at Seneca's suggestion, Nero went forward to greet Agrippina who intruded on a meeting which the emperor was having with a delegation from Armenia (Tac. Ann. 13. 5; Dio Cass. 61. 3. 3-4).
13. Suet. Cl. 28; Tac. Ann. 11. 29; 13. 14.
Pallas' wealth was notorious (Tac. Ann. 12. 53; 14. 65; Suet. Cl. 28; Dio Cass. 63. 14. 3; Juv. Sat. 1. 109).
14. She may also have been annoyed by Burrus' failure to prevent the affair between Nero and Acte (Tac. Ann. 13. 12-3; Suet. Cl. 28). Some modern commentators have sympathised with Agrippina's reaction.

Garzetti (op. cit. p.147) argues that Seneca and Burrus 'imprudently and deceitfully' encouraged Nero's vices of which the affair with Acte was the first.

D. Gillis, 'The Portrait of Afranius Burrus in Tacitus' Annales' PP (1963) p.11 note 9. 'Yet this policy was less far-sighted than the two ministers believed. Dio (61. 4. 2) correctly observed that the more Nero indulged his passions the more insatiable he became. Ultimately Seneca and Burrus paid a heavy price for their toleration'.
15. Tac. Ann. 13. 14. debilis rursus Burrus et exul Seneca, trunca scilicet manu et professoria lingua generis humani regimen expostulantes.
16. Tacitus (Ann. 13. 6) clearly implies that the advice of Burrus was of considerable importance at this time. We have little knowledge of the extent of the prefect's own military experience. Tacitus (Ann. 12. 42) describes him as 'egregiae militaris famae'.

We know from ILS 1321 that he was a military tribune before becoming a procurator of imperial estates. It seems improbable that he acquired great military prestige in the first post, while the suggestion of H. G. Pflaum (Les Carrières Procuratoriennes Équestres sous Le Haut-Empire Romain (Paris 1960-1) vol. 1, no.13, p.30-31) that he took part in the conquest of Thrace in AD. /

AD. 46 is not convincing. McDermott (op. cit. p.232) argues that the phrase is used proleptically and refers to Burrus' part in the appointment of Corbulo, but this begs the question as to why Nero consulted Burrus on this matter in the first place. M. Griffin (Seneca - A Philosopher in Politics (Oxford 1976) p.82-3 note 5) suggests that the phrase signified Burrus' popularity with the Praetorians.

17. Tac. Ann. 13. 14.
18. Dio Cass. 61. 7. 3. 'ἔγω σε αυτοκράτορα ἀπέδειξα' cp. McDermott op. cit. p.237 'Agrippina's idea was not to depose Nero and substitute Britannicus, but to show that, if he were endangered by rivalry with his step-brother, Nero could better depend on her than Seneca and Burrus'.
19. It is worth noting that, at the end of AD. 54, an attempt to bring a charge of favouring Britannicus against an eques, Julius Densus, had failed due to Nero's intervention (Tac. Ann. 13. 10; cp. B. Baldwin 'Executions, Trials and Punishment in the Reign of Nero' PP (1967) p.429).
20. Tac. Ann. 13. 15; 12. 66; Pflaum, op. cit. vol. 1 no.29 p.69-73. Pollio was given the procuratorship of Sardinia. This was a fairly normal progression, though his role in this murder perhaps enhanced his prospects.
21. Tac. Ann. 13. 16; Suet. Nero 33; Dio Cass. 61. 7. 4; Jos. A J 20. 153; Grant, AOC p.160.
22. Tac. Ann. 13. 16.
23. Tac. Ann. 13. 18.
24. Tac. Ann. 13. 19.
25. Tac. Ann. 13. 18. Perhaps this was the cause of the charge brought later against Burrus and Pallas (Tac. Ann. 13. 23) see note 71).
26. It is worth noting that Publius Vitellius was forced to commit suicide in AD. 31 after being charged with offering the keys of the treasury to Seianus (Tac. Ann. 5. 8). In AD. 41 the conspirators were quick to seize control of public funds (Dio Cass. 59. 30. 3).
27. Tac. Ann. 13. 18. Claudius had already forbidden the officers of the Guard to visit the houses of senators (Suet. Cl. 25. cp. Dio Cass. 60. 29. 7a).
28. /

28. Tac. Ann. 13. 18; Suet. Nero 34; Dio Cass. 61. 8. 3-6.

29. Tac. Ann. 13. 18.

30. Tac. Ann. 13. 19.

31. Tac. Ann. 11. 12; 6. 20.

32. Tac. Ann. 13. 20.

33. Tac. Ann. 13. 20. Of this incident Gillis (op. cit. p.12-13) writes: 'All that Paris advised for Burrus was removal from command. Can this reflect fear of Burrus' military support, or is it a tacit admission both by Silana's friends and Nero that Burrus was too valuable a figure to be eliminated arbitrarily and that he could be won over from Agrippina and put to better use, namely her liquidation?'

This seems to me to be a serious misinterpretation of the events of that night. Firstly, there is no suggestion in Tacitus' text that Paris mentioned Burrus, let alone asked for his removal. His intended target was Agrippina; to have mentioned Burrus by name in his allegations would have been a serious error of judgement. It is clear that it was to be left to Nero to draw his own conclusions from the evidence against Agrippina as to Burrus' culpability in this matter.

34. Tacitus (Ann. 13. 20) is rightly suspicious of this account which is not confirmed by other sources and suggests that the motive of Fabius Rusticus was to enhance the role in this incident of his friend Seneca. cp. Syme, Tac. p.289.

On Caecina Tuscus, see Suet. Nero 35; Pflaum, op. cit. vol. 1 no. 16 p.44-6.

35. Tac. Ann. 13. 20.

36. Tac. Ann. 13. 21; cp. Griffin, Nero p.75.

37. Tac. Ann. 13. 21.

38. Tac. Ann. 13. 22 praefectura annonae Faenio Rufo, cura ludorum, qui a Caesare parabantur, Arruntio Stellae, Aegyptus Ti. Barbillo permittuntur. Suria P. Anteio destinata

39. Syme (Tac. p.623) argues against this view 'The historian is amicably disposed towards Burrus whose role in counsel and government he enhances with nowhere so much as a hint that honest Burrus was flagrantly lacking in 'fides' and 'pietas' towards Agrippina, the author of his elevation'. cp. Baldwin, op. cit. p.439.
'Burrus was a schemer and not at all scrupulous, especially in his relationship with Agrippina'.

40. /

40. Griffin, Sen. p.78. cp. Griffin, Nero p.74 'It was not the intention of Seneca and Burrus that Agrippina should be removed from the scene. Their influence over Nero depended largely on the fact that they provided a refuge from her tactless and arrogant demands'.
41. Tac. Ann. 13. 22. Dio Cassius (61. 10. 6) wrongly dates this accusation to AD. 58.
42. S.I. Oost, 'The Career of M. Antonius Pallas' AJP 79 (1958) p.136.
43. Tac. Ann. 13. 23 Burrus quamvis reus inter iudices sententiam dixit.
J. Crook, Consilium Principis (Cambridge 1955) p.47.
Griffin (Nero p.75, 254 note 39) calls Tacitus' description of Burrus' presence as a iudex at his own trial a 'distortion'.
44. Tac. Ann. 13. 45. She had been the wife of a former Praetorian prefect, Rufrius Crispinus, by whom she had a son, but had been seduced by Otho from whom she was taken by Nero (Plut. Galba 19).
Tac. Ann. 14. 1; Dio Cass. 61. 12. 1.
45. Tac. Ann. 14. 3; Suet. Nero 34.
46. Tac. Ann. 14. 5; Suet. Nero 34; Dio Cass. 61. 13. 2-3.
47. Tac. Ann. 14. 7.
48. Tacitus' reference to Nero's panic (Ann. 14. 7) suggests that he would have been unwilling to wait for them to journey from Rome.
49. Cp. McDermott, op. cit. p.251. 'But the most reasonable explanation is that the murder of Agrippina in 59 was planned by Nero with the knowledge of Seneca and Burrus'.
50. Tac. Ann. 14. 7. The validity of this assertion was weakened by the execution of Octavia three years later (Tac. Ann. 14. 64).
51. The emperor would certainly have had guards of some sort with him, but it seems more likely that on a visit of this kind they would have been from the German Guard rather than the Praetorian cohorts.
52. Tac. Ann. 14. 7; This is perhaps the basis of Dio Cassius' claim (61. 12. 1) that Seneca urged Nero to kill his mother.
53. Dio Cassius (61. 13. 5) mentions Nero's lack of confidence in the Praetorians at this time.
54. /

54. Cp. Gillis, op. cit. p.16 'Seneca realised first that the survival of Agrippina now would not only be the death of Nero but his own and Burrus' as well.
55. Tac. Ann. 14. 8; Dio Cass. 61. 13. 45.
56. Baldwin, op. cit. p.432.
57. Grant, AOC p.163. cp. B. Walker, The Annals of Tacitus. A Study in Historical Writing (Manchester 1952) p.222 'Seneca and Burrus assist in and defend Nero's matricide'.
58. I. S. Ryberg, 'Tacitus' Art of Innuendo', TAPA 73 (1942) p.402.
59. Tac. Ann. 14. 10. auctore Burro.
The allegation that the freedman had intended to kill Nero provided the justification for Agrippina's murder (Tac. Ann. 14. 7; Dio Cass. 61. 13. 4).
60. Tac. Ann. 13. 24; Dio Cass. 61. 8. 3.
61. Tac. Ann. 13. 25.
62. Suet. Nero 26; Tac. Ann. 13.25
63. Tac. Ann. 13. 48.
64. Tac. Ann. 14. 17.
65. Tac. Ann. 14. 14; Suet. Nero 41, 45; Dio Cass. 63. 1.1.; Dio Chrys . 71. 5-9.

Nero, whose entire reign may be regarded as a continual struggle for greater emancipation from the constraints imposed on him by his advisers, was resolved to use his freedom to develop fully his artistic talents. And so, as part of an attempt to maintain their influence over Nero, Burrus and Seneca adopted a complaisant attitude to what they regarded as the least objectionable of the emperor's whims and allowed him to drive his chariot in a private arena in the Vatican valley. Given Nero's character, it is clear, especially in retrospect, that such indulgence was ultimately disastrous, although what alternative courses of action were available to Burrus and Seneca it is difficult to perceive, for, at the very time they were trying to limit Nero's excesses, he himself was becoming increasingly aware that there was no limitations of his power. Chariot-racing did not, predictably, satisfy the emperor's aspirations and in his determination to win approval for his musical skills he organised the Iuvenalia, ostensibly to celebrate the first shaving of his beard.

Tac. Ann. 14. 14; Suet Nero II; Dio Cass. 61. 19. 1; 61. 21. 1).

66. Tac. Ann. 14. 15; Dio Cass. 61. 20. 1-2. It seems improbable that Burrus stood beside Nero prompting him (Dio Cass. 61. 20. 3) cp. McDermott, op. cit. p.241 note 2.

Burrus may have hoped not only to display the Praetorians' commitment to their emperor, but also perhaps, by taking up a large number of seats, to limit the number of outsiders who could see the emperor behaving in this way.

67. Tac. Ann. 15. 33; Suet. Nero 20.

68. Tac. Ann. 16. 4; Suet. Nero 21.

69. Suet. Nero 21.

70. Tac. Ann. 16. 5.

71. Tac. Ann. 1. 17; Suet. Tib. 25; Vell. Pat. 2. 125. 4; Plut. Otho 5-6. It is not inappropriate in this regard to compare the reputation of the Praetorians with that of Hitler's bodyguard regiment, the Leibstandarte, who were known in the 1930's as the 'Asphalt Soldiers'.

72. Tac. Ann. 14. 15; Suet. Nero 20; Dio Cass. 61. 20. 3-4. The rhythmic clapping was copied from a group of Alexandrians who attended Nero's first public performance in Naples in AD. 64.

73. Tac. Ann. 14. 15 et maerens Burrus ac laudans.

74. Tac. Ann. 15. 50.

75. Tac. Ann. 15. 67; Dio Cass. 62. 24. 2.

76. Plut. Galba 14.

77. Suet. Nero 25; Dio Cass. 63. 8. 3. The Augustiani had been with Nero during his tour of Greece. The lyre-player Diodorus shared his chariot as he entered Rome (Dio Cass. 63. 20. 3).

78. Griffin, Nero. p.163.

79. Gillis, op. cit. p.17 'We see a waning of Senecan and Burran influence'.

80. Tacitus (Ann. 14. 51) is uncertain, but Suetonius (Nero 35) and Dio Cassius (62. 13. 3) accept the poisoning as a fact.

Waltz (op. cit p.220 note 1) argues that modern historians are too prone to doubt poisonings in ancient times.

81. /

81. Burrus gradually asphyxiated due to internal neck swelling (Tac. Ann. 14. 51). It is almost certain that this was due to a malignant tumour of some description (Grant, Nero p.137). There are, of course, many different tissues in the neck any of which may undergo malignant change and grow to form a mass which could obstruct their air passages and lead to death. Although this case was probably due to a laryngeal carcinoma (cancer of the larynx or voice box), the neck tumour could also have been due to thyroid carcinoma, lymphoma (cancer of the lymph nodes or neck) and legion other causes. McDermott (op. cit. p.252) keeps a foot firmly in each camp. 'There is nothing inconsistent in the assumption that Nero and his new advisers, Poppaea and Tigellinus, planned the death of Burrus and seized a genuine illness as an excellent opportunity to make his death seem natural'.
82. Griffin, Nero p.69.
83. Tac. Ann. 14. 57.
84. Gillis, op. cit. p.22 note 22.
85. Tac. Ann. 13. 2; Dio Cass. 62. 13. 2.
86. Sen. Clem. 2. 1. 2; cp. Suet. Nero 10.
87. Tac. Ann. 14. 51; Ann. 12. 42 (Agrippina's arguments); Hist. 1. 72 (Tigellinus); Ann. 13. 22 (Faenius Rufus).
88. Tac. Ann. 14. 57.
89. Tac. Ann. 16. 18.
90. Tac. Ann. 16. 20. cp. Juv. Sat. 1. 155f. For a different interpretation of these lines see B. Baldwin 'Cover-names and Dead Victims in Juvenal', Athenaeum 45-6 (1967-8) p.308.
91. Dio Cass. 62. 13. 3-4.
92. Dio Cass. 62. 27. 3; cp. Tac. Ann. 15. 57.
93. Tac. Ann. 14. 57; 15. 50; Dio Cass. 62. 13. 3.
94. Dio Cass. 62. 28. 4.
95. Tac. Ann. 15. 40; cp. Suet. Nero 38; Dio Cass. 62. 16. 2; 62. 17. 1.
96. /

96. Juv. Sat. I. 155f; cp. Tac. Ann. 15. 44.
97. Tac. Ann. 15. 37; Dio Cass. 62. 15. 1-6.
98. Dio Cass. 63. 13. 1.
99. Tac. Ann. 16. 17; cp. Dio Cass. 63. 11. 2. where there is mention of similar behaviour by Tigellinus during Nero's tour of Greece, and Tac. Ann. 16. 14 where no-one is willing to witness the will of Publius Anteius until Tigellinus gives his sanction.
100. Dio Cass. 63. 21. 2.
101. Tac. Ann. 16. 21; 14. 48; cp. 13. 33.
102. Plut. Galba 17.
103. Dio Cass. 63. 13. 3; Griffin, Nero p.260 note 5.
104. B. W. Henderson, The Life and Principate of the Emperor Nero (London 1903) p.47 'Even an advocate with a novelist's imagination and without a vestige of historic scruple could do little with such a client'.
105. T. K. Roper, 'Nero, Seneca and Tigellinus', Historia 28 (1979) p.354; cp. Syme, Tac. p.552.
106. Garzetti, op. cit. p.160.
107. Griffin, Nero p.104.
108. Dio Cass. 59. 23. 9; scholiast on Juv. Sat. 1. 155; Plut. Galba 17; Otho 2.
109. Roper, op. cit. p.354.
110. Griffin, Sen. p.67-76; E. Cizek, L'Époque de Néron et ses Controverses Idéologiques (Leiden 1972) p.160.
111. R. Syme, 'Partisans of Galba', Historia 31 (1982) p.462.
112. Sen. Oct. 1. 870f.
113. Roper, op. cit. p.353.
114. Syme, Tac. p.263.
115. /

115. Syme, Tac. p.387; Roper (op. cit. p.346-57) argues wrongly that Seneca and Tigellinus were, in fact, political allies.
116. Griffin, Sen. p.133-5.
117. R. S. Rogers ('Five Over-Crowded Months? AD. 62', Studies in Honour of B. L. Ullman (Rome 1964) vol. 1, p.217-22) suggests that Tacitus manipulated the chronology of this period to try to show that it was the malice of Tigellinus that convinced Nero of the necessity of executing Plautus and Sulla.
118. Baldwin, op. cit. p.425-439.
119. Tac. Ann. 13. 23; cp. Dio Cass. 61. 10. 6; Tac. Ann. 13. 47.
120. Tac. Ann. 13. 22; 14. 22.
121. Tac. Ann. 14. 57.
122. Plut. Galba 17.
123. Tac. Ann. 15. 44.
124. Tac. Ann. 15. 57.
125. Tac. Ann. 14. 58-9; cp. Tac. Ann. 16. 10.
126. Tac. Ann. 15. 60-1.
127. Tac. Ann. 16. 10-1.
128. Tac. Ann. 16. 9.
129. Tac. Ann. 14. 64; cp. Suet. Nero 35.
130. Tac. Ann. 15. 67; cp. Plut. Galba 14 where Antonius Honoratus also mentions Octavia's execution as a cause of resentment against Nero among the Praetorians.
131. We should be cautious here, for Nero did not issue any bronze coins in the first ten years of his reign and suddenly there was a great deluge of issues starting in AD. 64. Often these coins relate to events which happened some years earlier.
132. /

132. BMC' p.226 no. 142; there are lots of varieties of this coin: no. 143 is illustrated as plate 42. 3.
M. Grant (Nero (London 1970) p.152) states as a fact that it is the Praetorian cavalry and indeed that corps enjoyed a high profile during Nero's reign (Dio Cass. 61. 9. 1), but it could quite easily be one of the German Guard on the coin.
133. BMC' p.218 no. 122 plate 41. 5; cp. Small. 292.
134. According to both Tacitus (Ann. 15. 49) and Dio Cassius (62. 24. 1) the tribune Subrius Flavus and the centurion Sulpicius Asper were the main driving forces behind the attempt. Tacitus (Ann 15. 50) mentions the involvement of two other tribunes, Gavius Silvanus and Statius Proxumus, and two centurions, Maximus Scaurus and Venetus Paulus.
135. Tac. Ann. 15. 50; cp. Dio Cass. 62. 24. 1.
136. Tac. Ann. 15. 50; cp. 14. 57; Dio Cass. 62. 13. 3.
137. Dio Cass. 59. 23. 9.
138. Griffin, Sen. p.107-8; A. M. Duff, 'Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire (Oxford 1928) p.178 'The reign of Nero saw no abatement in the power of imperial freedmen'.
139. According to Tacitus (Ann. 14. 65) Piso's involvement in anti-Neronian intrigues dated from AD. 62 following the allegations of Romanus. Later, however, he claims that Piso's participation in the conspiracy of AD. 65 was 'non a cupidine ipsius' (Tac. Ann. 15. 49).
140. In this regard they bear a considerable resemblance to the plotters against Hitler in 1944; see G. Reitlinger, The SS; Alibi of a Nation (London 1956) p.289-313.
141. The dates of the Cerialia were April the 12th to the 19th, the games being circensian on the opening and closing days.
142. Tac. Ann. 15. 53. Tacitus mentions, though only to dismiss, an allegation by Pliny that Antonia, Claudius' daughter, was to accompany Piso to the Praetorian camp.
143. Tac. Ann. 15. 49: Annaeus Lucanus whose poems Nero was suppressing.
144. Tac. Ann. 15. 49: Flavius Scaevinus and Afranius Quintianus.
145. /

145. Tac. Ann. 15. 49: Plautius Lateranus: He had been involved in the scandal of Messalina and Silius in AD. 48, but had been spared out of consideration for his uncle Aulus Plautius, the commander in Britain at that time (Tac. Ann. 11. 36).
146. Tac. Ann. 15. 50. It is quite clear that had the civilian conspirators possessed detailed knowledge of the extent of Praetorian involvement in the plot they would have, after their arrest, revealed it far sooner than they did.
147. Tac. Ann. 15. 51.
148. Tac. Ann. 15. 57.
149. Praetorians may have been involved in the undercover operation, organised by Sallustius Crispus, which resulted in the arrest in AD. 16 of Clemens, the impersonator of Agrippa Postumus (Tac. Ann. 2. 40; Suet. Tib. 25; Dio Cass. 57. 16. 4).
Seianus, according to Tacitus (Ann. 4. 67), used agents provocateurs against Agrippina and Nero Caesar.
150. Tac. Ann. 15. 54.
151. Tac. Ann. 15. 55; he had succeeded to this position on the death of Doryphorus (Tac. Ann. 14. 65).
152. Tac. Ann. 15. 56.
153. Tac. Ann. 15. 56: Lucan implicated his mother Acilia, while Quintianus and Senecio betrayed their closest friends. cp. Dio Cass. 62. 24: 3-4.
154. Tac. Ann. 15. 48.
155. B.H. Warmington, Nero - Reality and Legend (London 1969) p.136. 'He did not parade a forbidding morality'.
156. Syme, Tac. p.575. cp. J. Bishop, Nero - The Man and the Legend (London 1964) p.98 'a Nero manqué'.
157. Tac. Ann. 15. 65.
158. Tac. Ann. 15. 52. Piso refused to sanction the murder of Nero in a villa owned by him 'invidiam praetendens, si sacra mensae dique hospitales caede qualiscumque principis cruentarentur'. According to Tacitus, the real reason was his fear of what Lucius Silanus and the consul Vestinus might do in Rome while he was in Baiae for the assassination.
159. /

159. Tac. Ann. 15. 59.
160. Tac. Ann. 15. 58; cp. Small. 293: the German Guard was disbanded by Galba (Suet. Galba 12).
161. Tac. Ann. 15. 58 et quo fidem inscitiae pararet, atrox adversus socios.
162. Tac. Ann. 15. 60. Plautius Lateranus' role in the plot was to have been vital for he was to approach Nero at the Circus on the pretext of petitioning him for financial help and seize his legs, while the Praetorians stabbed him (Tac. Ann. 15. 53; cp. Epictetus 1. 1. 20).
163. ILS 2701 = Small. 282 = Braund 517.
164. Tac. Ann. 15. 50.
165. Tac. Ann. 15. 60. The evidence for Seneca's involvement in the plot was, at least according to Tacitus, extremely flimsy. cp. Griffin, Sen. p.96 note 2, p.367; Griffin, Nero p.174.
According to Dio Cassius (62. 24. 1) Seneca was a leading participant.
166. Tac. Ann. 15. 61. Silvanus felt unable to face Seneca himself and sent one of his centurions: cp. Suet. Nero 35. For Seneca's suicide see Tac. Ann. 15. 62-63; Dio Cass. 62. 25. 1-3; Griffin, Sen. p.367-373, 383.
167. It is interesting to compare Rufus' role in and fate after this plot with that of the German general, Fritz Fromm, during and after the bomb plot of the 20th of July 1944. Both were in command of the unit to which the conspirators belonged, both gave lukewarm support to the coup, both were arrested and executed, despite their attempts to conceal their involvement (Reitlinger, op. cit. p.329-32).
168. Tac. Ann. 15. 59.
169. Tac. Ann. 15. 66. It is reasonable to assume that Scaevinus' denunciation merely confirmed Nero's previous suspicions of Faenius Rufus.
170. Tac. Ann. 15. 67; Dio Cass. 62. 24. 2.
171. Tac. Ann. 15. 68; Dio Cass. 62. 24. 2.
172. Tac. Ann. 15. 68.
173. /

173. Tac. Ann. 15. 72; Suet. Nero 10; Dio Cass. 62. 27. 4.
174. Tac. Ann. 15. 71. Their names were Pompeius, Cornelius Martialis, Flavius Nepos and Statius Domitius.
175. Griffin, Nero p.168.
176. Tac. Ann. 15. 71. Silvanus certainly committed suicide, but the exact manner of Proxumus' death is less clear.
(A. J. Church and W. J. Brodribb, Annals of Tacitus (London 1879) p.376.).
177. Tac. Ann. 15. 69.
178. Tac. Ann. 15. 71; 16. 17. As a former husband of Poppaea he was particularly hated by Nero.
179. Tac. Ann. 16. 12. Publius Gallus, a friend of Faenius Rufus.
180. Tac. Ann. 15. 72.
181. ILS 9919; Pflaum, op. cit. vol. 1 p.85-87 no. 36; L. Jalabert, R. Mouterde, C. Mondesert, J. P. Coquais, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique, vol. 78, Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de La Syrie, vol. 6 Baalbek et Bequa (Paris 1967) p.99-101 no. 2781.

Naso was, according to the inscription, a tribune in the legion 1 Italica formed by Nero in AD. 66, so he may not have achieved his Praetorian tribunate until a later date.
182. Tac. Hist. 1. 20 exauctorati per eos dies tribuni, e praetorio Antonius Taurus et Antonius Naso, ex urbanis cohortibus Aemilius Pacensis, e vigilibus Iulius Fronto.

Pflaum, op. cit. vol. 1, p.87-88 no. 36a.

Jalabert, op. cit. p.100 (referring to Naso) son attachement à la dynastie julio-claudienne vaut à Naso d'être mis à la retraite par Galba'.
183. We can perhaps detect a similar prejudice among Otho's Praetorians in AD. 69 (Tac. Hist. 1. 84).
184. Tac. Ann. 15. 69. The evidence for his eastern origin is slight. The same name, or at least a feminine form of it, is employed in a Greek inscription.

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ΠΕΡΑΠΟΛΛΩΝΙΟΥΤΟΥ
ΕΡΜΑΝΔΕΙΜΙΔΟΣΤΗΝΕ
ΛΥΤΟΥΓΥΝΛΙΚΑΓΕΡΕΛΛΑ
5 ΝΗΝΜΟΝΙΜΕΙΝΚΑΙΤΗΝΕΑΥ
ΤΟΥΜΗΤΕΡΑΓΕΡΕΛΛΑ
185. / ΝΗΝΑΠΑΤΗΝΗΡΟΙΝΑΙ
ΧΑΙΡΕΤΕ

185. G. Schumann, *Hellenistische und griechische Elemente in der Regierung Neros* (Leipzig 1930) p.34-49; M. Griffin, *Nero* p.211-3.
186. Tac. Ann. 15. 59. nam vetus miles timebatur tamquam favore inbutus.
187. Durry, p.370 'Faut-il croire que Néron a eu maille à partir avec les officiers de sa garde, mais qu'il avait pour lui les hommes? Pas même. Au moment où il terrasse les conjurés de 65, il se défie du vetus miles, âme du prétoire.
188. Dio Cass. 63. 4. 2-3; Suet. Nero 13.
189. Thrasea Paetus: Tac. Ann. 16. 21; cp. Dio Cass. 62. 26. 1.
The main charge was that his failure to attend the Senate was a calculated act of disloyalty to the emperor. Nero had disliked him personally, quite apart from his adherence to Stoicism, for many years (Tac. Ann. 13. 49; 14. 12; 14. 48; 15. 20-21).
Barea Soranus: Tac. Ann. 16. 23; cp. Dio Cass. 62. 26. 1.
190. Tac. Ann. 16. 27-8. cp. the description by Shirer, op. cit. p.248 of the scene in the Kroll Opera House, Berlin, on the 23rd of March 1933 when the Reichstag convened to hear Hitler speak on the Enabling Act which paved the way for a Nazi dictatorship.
'The aisles were now lined with brown-shirted storm troopers whose scarred bully faces indicated that no nonsense would be tolerated from the representatives of the people'.
191. Tac. Ann. 15. 36.
192. Suet. Nero 36. His contempt for the senatorial aristocracy was now considerable (Suet. Nero 37) as his cronies were quick to recognise and use to their advantage (Tac. Hist. 4. 42; Dio Cass. 63. 13. 2; Pliny, Ep. 1. 5. 3).
193. Dio Cass. 63. 11. 2; Small. 26.
194. Dio Cass. 63. 8. 3. For Nero's entourage see K. R. Bradley, 'Nero's Retinue in Greece AD. 66/67' *Illinois Classical Studies* IV, (1979) p.152f.
195. As does his choice of Helius as his plenipotentiary in Rome during his absence (Dio Cass. 63. 12. 1). According to Tacitus (Ann. 13. 1) the freedman had been involved in the death of Junius Silanus in AD. 54.
196. /

196. Tac. Ann. 15. 72; Plut. Galba 9. Although Tacitus does not totally dismiss the possibility, he is clearly sceptical. Plutarch mentions the rumour that his father was a gladiator named Martianus. His mother was Nymphidia, the daughter of Callistus.
197. ILS 1322 = Small. 269.
198. Tac. Ann. 15. 72.
199. Griffin, Sen. p.95; cp. Pflaum, op. cit. p.206 where he argues for an earlier period of eastern dominance initiated by Agrippina and Pallas in AD. 49.
200. Griffin, Nero p.180.
201. Grant (Nero p.216) suggests that Tacitus may be biased against Nymphidius Sabinus because of his humble origins.
202. Dio Cass. 63. 19. 1.
203. The senators had to endure the mismanagement of Rome by Helius. (Dio Cass. 63. 18. 2-3) while Nero insulted their honour in Greece (Suet. Nero 37).

The enforced suicides of Corbulo, Sulpicius Rufus and Sulpicius Proculus cannot have been popular (Dio Cass. 63. 17. 2). Arrears of pay (Suet. Nero 32) may also have been a cause of discontent, although RJA Talbert ('Some Causes of Disorder in AD. 68-69' AJAH I, vol. 2 (1977) p.72) denies this and writes of the charge as 'a stock accusation levelled against any bad emperor'. The people may have blamed Nero for the corn shortage, especially when rumours were circulating that he was using corn ships to import sand for his court wrestlers (Suet. Nero 45). Nero in fact, had always been especially solicitous about the corn supply (Tac. Ann. 15. 36; 15. 39; Suet. Nero 19) and the corn shortage in the spring of AD. 68 was probably due to the revolt of Clodius Macer in Africa; see K. R. Bradley, 'A Publica Fames in AD. 68', AJP 93 (1972) p.451-8.
204. Dio Cass. 63. 20. 4.
205. Tac. Ann. 14. 45; 14. 61.
206. Griffin, Nero p. 180 'Nero was insulated from unappreciative audiences and candid advisers'.
207. Dio Cass. 63. 10. 2. where a soldier is said to have released a prisoner on his own initiative.
208. /

208. Suet. Nero 19; Dio Cass. 63. 16. 1-2; cp. Yavetz, op. cit. p.129 'The pampered Praetorians did not forgive him for this'.

209. Dio Cass. 63. 13. 1-3; cp. Suet. Nero 28-29.

210. Suet. Nero 25.

211. Tac. Hist. 1. 89.

212. Grant, Nero p.246.

213. Suet. Nero 40; Dio Cass. 63. 22. 2-6: Vindex's revolt occurred in the middle of March AD. 68. Nero may well, as Griffin (Nero p.181) suggests, have at first regarded it as a minor nationalist uprising. cp., Syme, Tac. p.46 'a native insurrection against Roman power'.

For the view that Vindex was acting on behalf of the Roman Senate see P. A. Brunt, 'The Revolt of Vindex and the Fall of Nero', *Latomus* 18 (1959) p.531-59 and C. M. Kraay, 'The Coinage of Vindex and Galba AD. 68 and the Continuity of the Augustan Principate' *Num. Chron. ser. 6*, vol. 9 (1949) p.129-49.

214. Suet. Nero 42; 47; Dio Cass. 63. 27. 1; Plut. Galba 5. He fainted on hearing the news, then spoke ominously of a wholesale massacre of senators.

215. Galba was reluctant at first to become involved but when intercepted despatches proved that Nero had ordered his death (Suet. Galba 9), he felt compelled, under pressure from Titus Vinius (Plut. Galba 4; cp. Tac. Hist. 1. 6.) to declare against Nero, which he did in early April (Dio Cassius 64. 6.52; cp. Griffin, Nero p.181 - the 3rd of April; Grant, AOC. p.178 - the 2nd of April; Blunt, op. cit. p.534 - the 6th of April) professing to be the legate of the Senate and the people of Rome (Plut. Galba 5).

Nero was not totally indolent, for he now assumed the consulship (Suet. Nero 43; Pliny, Pan. 57. 2) and had Galba declared a public enemy (Plut. Galba 5). He also summoned home units on their way to the east (Tac. Hist. 1. 6; 1. 9; 1. 31; 1. 70) and recruited a legion from the fleet at Misenum and other units in Rome, all of whom were organised into an army group under the loyalist general Petronius Turpilianus (Tac. Ann. 15. 72; Dio Cass. 63. 27 1a). Another general, Rubrius Gallus, was also sent to this group, possibly after Vesontio (Dio Cass. 63. 27. 1). Galba received support from Otho, the governor of Lusitania (Plut. Galba 20; Tac. Hist. 1. 13), from Caecina, the quaestor in Baetica (Tac. Hist. 1. 53) and more ambiguous backing from Clodius Macer in Africa (Plut. Galba 6; 13; Tac. Hist. 1. 7; 1. 73).

216. The battle of Vesontio which resulted in the destruction of Vindex's revolt by the legions of upper Germany under Verginius Rufus (Tac. /

(Tac. Hist. 1. 51; Pliny, Ep. 9. 19. 5; Plut. Galba 6; Dio Cass. 63. 25. 4) was followed by the offer of the legions to make their commander emperor (Plut. Galba 6; cp. Tac. Hist. 1. 8; Dio Cass. 63. 27. 1).

For more detailed examinations of these incidents, see Brunt, op. cit. p.537-43; J. B. Hainsworth, 'Verginus and Vindex' *Historia* II (1962) p.86-96; D.C.A. Shotter, 'Tacitus and Verginius Rufus' *CQ* 17 (1967) p.370-81.

217. Suet. Nero 47; cp. Hohne, op. cit. p.534 (describing Heinrich Himmler's mental state in May 1945).

'He imagined himself founding a new Nazi party to be known as the 'Party of National Union'. He planned a post-war Government in which one of the Ministers was to be Otto Ohlendorf, the head of the Inland S.D., with whom he had so long been at loggerheads. He drew up a new Government programme. But as the Great German Reich disintegrated under the Allies' armoured thrusts, so Himmler's hopes and hallucinations shrank to a more modest scale. He started determined to be the Fuhrer of post-war Germany. Then he coveted the position of No. 2 to Karl Dönitz, Hitler's successor, and fled to his headquarters in Flensburg. Finally the job of Minister-President of Schleswig-Holstein seemed adequate.'

218. The significance of the Praetorians' desertion may have been overstated by G. E. F. Chilver, 'The Army in Politics AD. 68-70' *JRS* 47 (1957) p.31. 'Yet it was his Praetorians who finally destroyed Nero'. It is quite clear that by early June AD. 68 Nero's fall was imminent and the defection of the Praetorians was no more than a recognition of this fact.

219. Brunt, op. cit. p.541-42. Nymphidius Sabinus probably made contact with senatorial supporters of Galba (Grant, *AOC* p.180).

220. Plut. Galba 2. Even Plutarch, who is hostile to Nymphidius Sabinus, admits that his approach to the Praetorians on Galba's behalf took place only after it had become clear that Nero intended to flee to Egypt.

221. Despite the later claims of the Praetorians that they were duped by Nymphidius Sabinus into deserting Nero (Plut. Galba 14; Tac. Hist. 1. 5) it is evident that they saw it in their own interests to desert Nero at this time.

cp. Durry, p.370 'Les prétoriens ont commencé d'aimer Néron le jour où ils ont été sous la férule du vieil avare qu'était Galba'.

222. Bishop, op. cit. p.163-4. There is no textual evidence to support such a view.

223. /

223. Plut. Otho 2; Galba 8.
224. Tac. Hist. 1. 72; cp. Plut. Galba 17.
225. Dio Cass. 63. 27. 1a-2; Suet. Nero 47; Plut. Galba 2.
226. Suet. Nero 35; Tac. Ann. 15. 36; Dio Cass. 63. 18. 1. This interest had led him to send out, between AD. 62 and AD. 64, a party of Praetorians led by two centurions to search for the source of the Nile. (Pliny, HN 6. 181; 184; Sen. QNat 6. 8. 3).
According to Dio Cassius (63. 8. 1) he also considered campaigning in Ethiopia.
227. The prefect of Egypt, Tiberius Julius Alexander (Pflaum, op. cit. vol. 1, no. 17, p.46-49) issued an edict (Small. 391 = Braund 600) proclaiming support for Galba on the 6th of July, only a week or so after he could have received news of Galba's elevation by the Senate. It is reasonable to assume that the edict was drafted earlier.
228. Suet. Nero 47. uno vero etiam proclamante, 'Usque adeone mori miserum est?'
229. Suet. Nero 47; Dio Cass. 63. 27. 2b-3.
230. Suet. Nero 47.
231. Suet. Nero 57; Dio Cass. 63. 29. 3.
232. Suet. Nero 48; Dio Cass. 63. 27. 3.
233. Suet. Nero 48; cp. Plut. Galba 7.
234. Suet. Nero 48; Dio Cass. 63. 38. 1.
235. Suet. Nero 48; Dio Cass. 63. 28. 2-5.
236. Suet. Nero 49; Dio Cass. 63. 29. 2.
237. Suet. Nero 49; cp. Suet. Cl. 34; Suet. Dom. 11; Livy 1. 26. 6.
238. Suet. Nero 49; Dio Cass. 63. 29. 1-2.
239. Suet. Nero 49. 'haec est fides'.

CHAPTER VI : THE PRAETORIAN GUARD FROM THE DEATH OF NERO TO
THE ACCESSION OF VESPASIAN

1. Plut. Galba 2; cp. Suet. Nero 47.
2. Tac. Hist. 1. 5.
3. Tac. Hist. 1. 30.
4. Plut. Galba 14.
5. Tac. Hist. 1. 72. Tigellinus enjoyed the protection of both Galba (Suet. Galba 15) and Titus Vinius (Plut. Galba 17) despite widespread demands for his punishment (Dio Cass. 64. 3. 3). He was eventually forced to suicide by Otho (Tac. Hist. 1. 72; Plut. Otho 2).
6. Nymphidius emphasised, in a misplaced effort to impress Galba, his role in the fall of Nero (Plut. Galba 9). Such a claim did not entirely displease the Praetorians since it appeared, to some extent, to exculpate them.
7. Plut. Galba 8.
8. Plut. Galba 8.
9. Tac. Ann. 15. 72; Plut. Galba 9. ἐπὶ τὴν διαδοχὴν προεδύετο τῆς ἡγεμονίας
10. Plut. Galba 11; 13.
11. Plut. Galba 9.
12. Plut. Galba 13; Suet. Galba 14; cp. Tac. Hist. 1. 6.
13. G. Manfré ('Il tentativo imperiale di Gaio Ninfidio Sabino' Riv. Fil. 19 (1941) p.118-20) wrongly views Nymphidius as the representative of the whole military-provincial world opposed to the Senate. p.119. 'Ninfidio, abbattuto Nero, tentò di assicurarsi per l'avvenire, l'autorità che la classe militare, di cui era l'esponente, aveva acquistato nell'elezione dell'imperatore attraverso la rivoluzione.'
14. The corruption of Galba's main advisers, Vinius, Laco and Icelus, was ruinous to the reputation of his principate. R. Syme ('Partisans of Galba' Historia 31 (1982) p.460) describes Galba as 'dominated by a camarilla, narrow, nasty and discordant'. For Galba's physical condition, see Suet. Galba 21.
15. /

15. Plut. Galba 13; Suet. Galba 11; Tac. Hist. 1. 5. Dio Cass. (64. 2. 3) seems uncertain as to Nymphidius' culpability.
16. Syme, op. cit. (see note 14) p.476 links him with Verginius Rufus (cos. 63) and Silius Italicus (cos. 68) as Transpadane consuls emergent in the later part of Nero's principate. His speech-writing cost him dearly. He was put to death during Galba's journey to Rome (Plut. Galba 15; Tac. Hist. 1. 6; 1. 37.).
17. Plut. Galba 14.
18. Durry p.371 les prétoriens ont encore le respect de la maison imperiale et de l'aristocratie qui l'approche.
19. Plut. Galba 14 *τιμωραὶ μὲν Νέρωνος, Γάλβας δὲ φύλακες ἀγαθοὶ καὶ πιστοὶ φανώμενοι*
20. Plut. Galba 14.
21. Suet. Galba 6 (in Germany); 7 (in Africa); 9 (in Spain).
22. Tac. Hist. 1. 5; Plut. Galba 18; Suet. Galba 16; Dio Cass. 64. 3. 3. cp. A. Massie, The Caesars (London 1983) p.175 'an expression better suited to the theatre than to the world of real politics': in contrast P.A.L. Greenhalgh (The Year of the Four Emperors (London 1975) p.26) describes Galba's words as 'a fine sentiment and spoken like a great emperor'.
23. Plut. Galba 29 *ἀρχαὶ ἰξίου τῶν ὑπὸ Τιγελλίνου καὶ Νυμφιδίου τετιθασευμένων*
24. Suet. Galba 20; Tac. Hist. 1. 41.
25. Tac. Hist. 1. 18; Plut. Galba 23; Suet. Galba 17.
26. Tac. Hist. 1. 25.
27. Tac. Hist. 1. 25; Plut Galba 15; Suet. Galba 16.
28. Tac. Hist. 1. 20.
29. ILS 9919; see also A. von Domaszewski, 'Beiträge zur Kaisergeschichte' Philologus 66 (1907) p.161-173.
30. Tac. Hist. 1. 13.
31. /

31. Laco is rightly rebuked by Tacitus for his failure to prevent the plot (Hist. 1. 24; 1. 26). His entire prefecture is condemned by commentators both ancient (Tac. Hist. 1. 6; Suet. Galba 14) and modern (Garzetti op. cit. p.196 referring to Laco's appointment, 'the error is manifest'; Syme, Tac. p.151 'A person destitute of military experience. Previously a petty law officer he had only arrogance and obstinacy to supplement his ignorance'.)
32. Pflaum op. cit. p.85-87 no. 36; Jalabert op. cit. p.99-101 no. 2781; cp. L. Keppie 'Colonisation and Veteran Settlement in Italy in the First Century AD.' PBSR 52 (1984) p.92.
33. Suet. Nero 47.
34. Pflaum op. cit. p.87-88 no. 36a has a full note on Antonius Taurus.
35. Suet. Galba 10.
36. cp. Tac. Hist. 1. 84. Italiae alumni et Romana vere iuventus.
37. Garzetti (op. cit. p.195) writes of the 'fundamental error' made by Galba in believing that senatorial approval guaranteed the security of his principate.
38. Otho, born in AD. 32, the second son of a proconsul of Africa, was in AD. 58 appointed governor of Lusitania by Nero who desired his wife Poppaea (Tac. Ann. 13. 46; Hist. 1. 13; Plut. Galba 20; Suet. Otho 3).

Despite later accusations of effeminacy and homosexuality (Suet. Otho 2; Juv. Sat. 2. 99-101; Mart. Epigr. 6. 32. 2), he displayed considerable energy and competence both during his governorship and later as princeps.
39. Tac. Hist. 1. 23. It remains a matter of some debate whether a Praetorian cohort did, in fact, escort Galba from Spain to Rome. Tacitus, describing the unpopularity of Galba's attempts to impose discipline on the Praetorians, writes 'cum Campaniae lacus et Achaiae urbes classibus adire soliti Pyrenaeum et Alpes et immensa viarum spatia aegre sub armis eniterentur'.

A. L. Irvine (Tacitus: Histories 1 and 2 (London 1952) p.121) has the following comment on that passage 'But the rhetoric goes astray here; the troops from Spain had not escorted Nero, and the Praetorians had not marched from Spain'. Chilver (op. cit. p.33) suggests that the only troops which escorted Galba from Spain were legionaries of the VII Hispana. On the other hand both K. Wellesley (The Long Year AD. 69 (London 1975) p.6-7) and Talbert (op. cit. p.74) argue that a detachment of Praetorians had been sent out from Rome by sea as a sovereign's escort. It is, however, equally possible that Galba himself raised a Praetorian cohort in Spain. He certainly had a bodyguard of equites in Spain (Suet. Galba 10), possibly commanded by Titus Vinius (Plut. Galba 4).
40. /

40. Tac. Hist. 1. 23. Throughout history ordinary soldiers have rewarded with great devotion commanders who have taken the trouble to learn their names. The following example, though rather florid, is instructive in this regard. In *End Kampf um Berlin* (Buenos Aires 1947) p.77 (translated from the Swedish *Ragnaröck*, (Stockholm 1946)) Wiking Jerk, a Swedish volunteer in the Waffen S.S., describes an inspection at Schwedt on the Oder front in March 1945 by S.S. General Felix Steiner.

'As he approached me, his stern features brightened into a beaming smile. He had recognised me. And yet it was almost a year since I had taken part in a deputation from all ranks of the division which greeted him at Narva on his birthday. Since then he had seen innumerable new faces and yet he recognised mine. He called me by my name. I no longer stood on the ground but swam in a rosy cloud of happiness'.
41. Tac. Hist. 1. 23. Since Otho had been in Lusitania since AD. 58, it is reasonable to assume that the reminiscences must have been of the most general kind.
42. Plut. Galba 20; Tac. Hist. 1. 23.
43. Plut. Galba 21; Suet. Otho 5; Tac. Hist. 1. 21.
44. Tac. Hist. 1. 23.
45. Tac. Hist. 1. 23; Suet. Otho 4.
46. Tac. Hist. 1. 23.
47. Plut. Galba 23.
48. Tac. Hist. 1. 24. According to Plutarch (Galba 20) and Suetonius (Otho. 4) Otho himself presented a gold piece to each member of the cohort.
49. Tac. Hist. 1. 25; Plut. Galba 24; Suet. Otho 5; Dio Cass. 64. 5. 3. Suetonius (Otho 5) alleges that Otho extorted 1,000,000 sesterces from one of the emperor's slaves to finance this coup.
50. Tac. Hist. 1. 26.
51. Tac. Hist. 1. 27; Plut. Galba 25. Suetonius (Otho 5) mentions fifteen speculatores, each paid 10,000 sesterces and promised 50,000 more.
52. Tac. Hist. 1. 27; Plut. Galba 24f; Suet. Otho 6.
53. /

53. Tac. Hist. 1. 27; Plut. Galba 25; Suet. Otho 6.
54. Tac. Hist. 1. 27 ibi tres et viginti speculatores consalutatum imperatorem ac paucitate salutantium trepidum et sellae festinanter impositum strictis mucronibus rapiunt. Totidem ferme milites in itinere adgregantur. Plutarch (Galba 25) is vague as to the actual number of soldiers with Otho when he reached the camp.
 φερομένῳ δὲ οὕτω δι' ἀγορᾶς ἀπήντησαν ἑτέροι. τοσοῦτοι καὶ πάλιν κατὰ τρεῖς καὶ τέτταρας ἄλλοι προσεπελάσον.
55. Tac. Hist. 1. 28; Plut. Galba 25; cp. Tac. Hist. 1. 82.
56. Tac. Hist. 1. 29; Plut. Galba 25.
57. Tac. Hist. 1. 31.
58. Tac. Hist. 1. 31; cp. Dio Cass. 64. 6. 1.
59. Tac. Hist. 1. 34.
60. Tac. Hist. 1. 31; Plut. Galba 25; Suet. Galba 19.
61. Tac. Hist. 1. 31. Syme (op. cit. (see note 14) p.474) suggests that 'the tribune may well be that Cn. Pompeius Longinus who, legate of Judaea in 86 and consul suffect in 90, advanced to the governorships of Moesia Superior and Pannonia'. Subrius Dexter too gained later promotion, though of a more modest kind. In 74 he was procurator in Sardinia (CIL 10. 8023f).
62. Tac. Hist. 1. 39.
63. Tac. Hist. 1. 31. The Germans had been well-treated by Galba after a useless and dangerous voyage, in preparation for Nero's planned Caspian campaign, to Alexandria and back (Suet. Galba 20).
64. Tac. Hist. 1. 31; 1. 34; cp. Plut. Galba 15; Suet. Galba 13; Dio Cass. 64. 3. 1-2.
65. Tac. Hist. 1. 33; 1. 39; Plut. Galba 26.
66. Tac. Hist. 1. 35; Suet. Galba 19; Plut. Galba 26; Dio Cass. 64. 6. 2.
 Wellesley (op. cit. p.25) describes Atticus as 'obviously acting a part'.
67. Tac. Hist. 1. 36.
68. /

68. Tac. Hist. 1. 38; Suet. Galba 19; Otho 6.
69. Tac. Hist. 1. 41; Plut. Galba 26. The gesture was perhaps pre-arranged: see Tac. Hist. 1. 38.
70. Tac. Hist. 1. 41.
71. Tac. Hist. 1. 41; Plut. Galba 27; Suet. Galba 20; Dio Cass. 64. 6. 3. Tacitus names 3 alleged killers, Plutarch 4; none are specifically mentioned as Praetorians; indeed Camurius, the most probable killer, was a legionary of legio XV Primigenia.
72. Tac. Hist. 1. 42; Plut. Galba 27. His killer was a legionary named Julius Carus.
- His arch-rival Laco, the Praetorian prefect, did not long survive him. He was first banished to an island and later put to death. (Tac. Hist. 1. 46). Plutarch (Galba 27) appears to believe that Laco was killed at the same time as Vinus.
73. Tac. Hist. 1. 43. According to Plutarch (Galba 26) and Dio Cass. (64. 6. 4) Sempronius Densus defended Galba himself.
74. Tac. Hist. 1. 43; Plut. Galba 27; cp. Dio Cass. 64. 6. 5¹. Tacitus names his killers as Sulpicius Florus, a British auxiliary and Statius Murcus, a speculator. Plutarch mentions only the latter.
75. Tac. Hist. 1. 44; Plut. Galba 27; Suet. Galba 20; Dio Cass. 64. 6. 5a.
76. Tac. Hist. 1. 46. omnia deinde arbitrio militum acta.
77. Suet. Otho 7; Dio Cass. 64. 8. 1. As evidence of this he could cite his treatment of Marius Celsus (Tac. Hist. 1. 45; 1. 71).
78. Tac. Hist. 1. 46. cp. Howe, op. cit. p.41-2.
- 'The short reign of Julianus is remarkable in the history of the prefecture chiefly for the single known example of prefects chosen by the Praetorians themselves and merely ratified in their appointment by the emperor'.
79. Dio Cass. 64. 8. 2²; cp. Tac. Hist. 1. 77; 1. 81.
- The allegiance of the Senate guaranteed the loyalty of many provinces according to Tacitus (Hist. 1. 76).
80. Tac. Hist. 1. 74. Suetonius (Galba 16) tells us that the legions of Upper Germany, after smashing the images of Galba and taking their oath in the names of the Senate and the People of Rome on the /

the 1st of January AD. 69, also decided to send a deputation to the Praetorians in Rome to say that the emperor created in Spain was unacceptable to them and that the Praetorians should choose a candidate acceptable to all the armies. This seems highly improbable.

81. There are two types of coin with these inscriptions from about this date - one specific to Vitellius and minted at Tarraco (BMC' p.384 no. 80) and a more general military class as detailed in the introduction to the BM catalogue p. CXCVlllf; see also p.306.
82. C. Kraay ('Revolt and Subversion: The So-Called 'Military' Coinage of AD. 69 Re-examined' Num. Chron. (1952) p.78-86) argues correctly that these coins were issued after Otho's accession rather than, as Mattingly suggests, at the end of AD. 68.
83. Tac. Hist. 1. 74.
84. Kraay (op. cit. p.84) suggests that these coins might have been carried back to Rome by the Praetorians who had taken part in the embassy to the Vitellians in Germany to be distributed among their fellow-soldiers there.
85. According to Suetonius (Claudius 25) this unit had been stationed by Claudius at Ostia as a fire-brigade.
86. Tac. Hist. 1. 80f; Plut. Otho 3; Suet. Otho 8; cp. Dio Cass. 64. 9. 2-3.
The 3 main accounts vary. Plutarch seems to think that the incident occurred in Ostia, though it is clear from Tacitus' mention of an armoury that the location was the Praetorian camp.
87. E. G. Hardy (Plutarch's Lives of Galba and Otho (London 1890) p.216) believes that Otho sent for the 17th cohort in order to enrol it among the Praetorians.
E. Hohl ('Der Prätorianeraufstand unter Otho' Klio 22 (1939) p.307-24) more plausibly views this episode as an attempt by Otho to equip the naval expedition to Liguria which he was organising and which was to be commanded by a tribune from the urban cohorts.
H. Heubner ('Der Prätorianertumult vom Jahre 69 n. Chr.' Rh. Mus. 101 (1958) p.339-53) suggests that Hohl has misinterpreted Plutarch and has placed too much faith in Suetonius' version, but his own explanation is not convincing.
88. Tac. Hist. 1. 81; Plut. Otho 3; Dio Cass. 64. 9. 3.
89. Tac. Hist. 1. 82.
90. /

90. Tac. Hist. 1. 82. Suetonius' account (Otho 8) seems wrongly to suggest that some tribunes were killed at the palace; cp. Heubner. op. cit. p.349.

91. Tac. Hist. 1. 82; Plut. Otho 3; Dio Cass. 64. 9. 3. Wellesley (op. cit. p.59) writes of 'a douceur of 5000 sesterces'.

92. Tac. Hist. 1. 82.

93. Tac. Hist. 1. 83f; Plut. Otho 3.

94. Tac. Hist. 1. 83; cp. Plut. Otho 3 *καὶ τὸ πρὸς πλεῖστον ἐπηγεσθαι, ὥς πρὸς αὐτὸν εὐνοῦν καὶ πρόθυμον*

95. Tac. Hist. 1. 85.

96. Tac. Hist. 2. 23; Plut. Otho 5.

97. Tac. Hist. 1. 87 is urbanae militiae impiger, bellorum insolens. cp. Plut. Otho 7.

The replacement for political reasons of experienced soldiers by police generals has rarely produced a happy outcome. The reality of front-line command almost inevitably debilitates their much-vaunted loyalty, while their lack of experience in military command can, as in Proculus' case, prove disastrous. Another notable feature of such appointees is that they tend to spend much of their time in machiavellian manoeuvrings to maintain their influence at court.

We have a modern example of all these failings in Heinrich Himmler, Hitler's police chief, who in January 1945 was appointed to the command of Army Group Vistula which was being relentlessly pounded by vastly superior Soviet forces. Himmler's lifestyle, however, did not respond to this critical situation.

'Himmler's second headquarters on the Eastern front was at the luxurious villa owned by Robert Ley, head of the German Labour Front, near the S.S. Ordensburg Crossinsee at Falenburg. Here he lived, in effect, the life of a civil servant who happened to be administering a war. He got up between eight and nine o'clock, received treatment from Kersten (his masseur) if he were there or from Gebhardt (his doctor), whose nursing home at Mohnlychen was in fact conveniently near. Between ten and eleven o'clock he received his war reports and took his decisions. After lunch he rested for a while, then conferred again with his staff officers. In the evening he was too tired to concentrate, and after dinner he went to bed. By ten o'clock he was inaccessible'.

(R. Manvell and H. Fraenkel, Himmler (London 1965) p.221).

98. Tac. Hist. 1. 87.

99. /

99. Tac. Hist. 2. 12-13; Agr. 7.
100. Tac. Hist. 2. 12. Aemilius Pacensis had been dismissed from his tribunate in the urban cohorts by Galba (Tac. Hist. 1. 20). He was reinstated by Otho and put in command of this expeditionary force (Tac. Hist. 1. 87). He died supporting the Flavian cause during the Vitellian assault on the Capitol (Tac. Hist. 3. 73).
101. Tac. Hist. 2. 14-15; cp. Suet. Otho 9.
102. Tac. Hist. 2. 18; cp. Plut. Otho 5; Suet. Otho 9.
103. Tac. Hist. 2. 19 is labor urbano militi insolitus contundit animos: cp. Plut. Otho 6.
104. Tac. Hist. 2. 19.
105. Tac. Hist. 2. 23.
106. Tac. Hist. 2. 44; cp. 2. 41 miles ducibus infensus.
107. Tac. Hist. 2. 52; Plut. Otho 16; cp. Dio Cass. 64. 15. 26.
108. Tac. Hist. 2. 67.
109. Tac. Hist. 2. 66. Wellesley (op. cit. p.99) suggests that these were the two Praetorian cohorts whose tribunes attempted an armistice with Caecina (Tac. Hist. 2. 41) and that they had been retained by the victors to form the basis of a reconstituted Praetorian Guard.
110. Tac. Hist. 2. 60; cp. Dio Cass. 65. 6. 2. Durry (p.374) claims that Vitellius executed Praetorian centurions, but it is clear from Tacitus that those treated in this way were from the Moesian legions.
111. cp. Dio Cass. 55. 23. 1f.
112. Wellesley (op. cit. p.99) suggests these locations, presumably because of the role of veterans 'exauctorati a Vitellio' in repulsing Valens from Forum Julii (Tac. Hist. 3. 43) and the presence in the Flavian army at Cremona of ex-Praetorians (Tac. Hist. 3. 21).
113. Tac. Hist. 2. 67; 2. 82; cp. 2. 96.
114. Dio Cass. 65. 5. 2.
115. /

115. Dio Cass. 65. 7. 2.
116. Tac. Hist. 2. 93. It was carried through by Fabius Valens:
cp. Tac. Hist. 3. 62 where the sight of Valens' head was partly
responsible for the surrender of the Praetorian cohorts at
Narnia.
117. P. Fabia 'Les Prétoriens de Vitellius' Rev. Phil. 38 (1914)
p.39.
118. Tac. Hist. 2. 93. The legionaries were allegedly given a free
choice as to which unit they joined (Tac. Hist. 2. 94).
119. Suet. Vit. 10 nihilque cunctatus, quicquid praetorianarum
cohortium fuit, ut pessimi exempli, uno exauctoravit edicto
iussas tribunis tradere arma.
120. Tacitus (Hist. 2. 94) mentions 20,000 men which seems to imply
that both the Praetorian cohorts and the urban cohorts were
completely renewed. There is no indication that the urban
cohorts of Otho were dismissed by Vitellius and it may well be
that 500 Vitellians were added to each of the existing units.
121. Garzetti, op. cit. p.214.
122. Keppie, op. cit. p.242 note 20.
123. Tac. Hist. 2. 93; 3. 9; 3. 13; 3. 31; Dio Cass. 65. 10. 2-4.
124. Tac. Hist. 3. 40.
125. Tac. Hist. 3. 56. The prefect of the Adriatic fleet at Ravenna,
Lucilius Bassus, disappointed in his hopes of a Praetorian
prefecture, also defected to the Vitellians (Tac. Hist. 2. 100;
3. 12; 3. 36; cp. 4. 3).
126. Tac. Hist. 3. 12 ne in Vitellii quidem partibus quietae mentes:
exitiosiore discordia non suspicionibus vulgi, sed perfidia
ducum turbabantur. cp. Tac. Hist. 2. 100; 3. 13; 3. 31.
127. Tac. Hist. 3, 55 tot milia armatorum, lecta equis virisque, si
dux alius foret, inferendo quoque bello satis pollebant.
cp. Wellesley. op. cit. p.162.
128. Tac. Hist. 3. 61.
129. /

129. There were 16 Praetorian cohorts during Vitellius' reign (Tac. Hist. 2. 93). After the defeat of the main Vitellian army in the second battle of Bedriacum Vitellius sent the Praetorian prefects to guard the Appennine passes with 14 cohorts and the Praetorian cavalry (Tac. Hist. 3. 55). After the defection of the fleet at Misenum Lucius Vitellius was sent to Campania with 6 Praetorian cohorts as well as 500 of the cavalry. (Tac. Hist. 3. 58). These units eventually surrendered at Bovillae (Tac. Hist. 4. 2). We know that there were 3 cohorts in Rome when Sabinus seized the Capitol (Tac. Hist. 3. 78). If we accept that these were Praetorian cohorts, this means that 7 cohorts must have surrendered at Narnia (Tac. Hist. 3. 63). It is possible that one cohort returned to Rome either with Vitellius himself (Tac. Hist. 3. 56) or with the Praetorian prefects (Tac. Hist. 3. 61).

With regard to the actual dating of this and subsequent events I accept the suggestions of K. Wellesley 'What happened in the Capitol in December AD. 69' (= Wellesley, Capitol) AJAH vol. 6 no. 2 (1981) p.166-90.

130. Tac. Hist. 3. 78.
131. Tac. Hist. 3. 58; Suet. Vit. 15; Dio Cass. 65. 16. 2.
132. Tac. Hist. 3. 63.
133. Tac. Hist. 3. 68; Suet. Vit. 15; Dio Cass. 65. 16. 3.
134. Tac. Hist. 3. 59; 3. 64.
135. Tac. Hist. 3. 69. Wellesley (Capitol p.173-4) rightly points out that Sabinus' house could scarcely have held 4,000 urbanici and 7,000 Vigiles together with leading senators and equites. He is, however, on less certain ground in claiming that 'the representatives of the urban cohorts were all ex-Othonian officers having no particular attachment to Vitellius. Although this was certainly true of Aemilius Pacensis (Tac. Hist. 2. 12) it is a dangerous generalisation. Furthermore it was surely expediency rather than political motivation which led these men to Sabinus' house, for they perceived that Vitellius had lost the war and was on the point of abdication.
136. Tac. Hist. 3. 69.
137. Sabinus' actions were later condemned by Primus and Mucianus Tac. Hist. 3. 78 sed cuncta festinatione, deinde ignavia Sabini corrupta, qui sumptis temere armis munitissimam Capitolii arcem et ne magnis quidem exercitibus expugnabilem adversus tris cohortis tueri nequivisset. cp. Tac. Hist. 3. 75.
138. Tac. Hist. 3. 69.
139. /

139. Tac. Hist. 3. 69; Dio Cass. 65. 17. 1-2. As Sabinus and a small group of supporters were heading from his house to the Forum, they were met at the Basin of Fundanus on the slope leading down to the centre of the city by a group of Vitellians, possibly Praetorians, and worsted in the ensuing skirmish.
Suetonius (Vit. 15) implies that Vitellius was directly responsible for the attack on Sabinus' group.
140. Tac. Hist. 3. 69; Dio Cass. 65. 18. 1-2. Greenhalgh op. cit. p.181 '.... the Vitellian soldiers, ready enough to face danger in battle, had little patience for conscientious picketing in the torrential rain which continued through the night'.
141. Tac. Hist. 3. 70.
142. Tac. Hist. 3. 77.
143. Tac. Hist. 3. 79; Dio Cass. 65. 18. 3. It is not specifically stated that the Flavian cavalry were driven back by Praetorians, but Wellesley (Capitol p.177) argues convincingly that the defending force were members of the Guard.
144. Tac. Hist. 3. 70.
145. Tac. Hist. 3. 71; Dio Cass. 65. 17. 3.
T. P. Wiseman ('Flavians on the Capitol' AJAH 3 (1978) p.166) suggests that the Vitellians who assaulted the Capitol, although Praetorians, did not come from the castra praetoria, but from the Palatium where a cohort of the Guard was normally based. Wellesley (Capitol p.179-84) dismisses this view.
146. Tac. Hist. 3. 73; Dio Cass. 65. 17. 3.
147. Tac. Hist. 3. 74.
148. Tac. Hist. 3. 80.
149. Tac. Hist. 3 80f; Suet. Vit. 16; Dio Cass. 65. 18. 3f.
150. Tac. Hist. 3. 82; Dio Cassius (65. 19. 2-3) claims that 50,000 died during the fighting.
151. Tac. Hist. 3. 84.
152. Tac. Hist. 3. 85; Suet. Vit. 17; Dio Cass. 65. 20. 2f.
153. /

153. Tac. Hist. 3. 86; cp. Tac. Hist. 4. 2; Dio Cass. 66. 1. 1.
154. Tac. Hist. 4. 2. Lucius Vitellius was executed: cp. Dio Cass. 65. 22. 1.
155. Tac. Hist. 4. 2; cp. Tac. Ann. 13. 9; Hist. 3. 6. Of the Vitellian prefects Julius Priscus committed suicide, Aferus Varus was allowed to remain alive (Tac. Hist. 4. 11).
156. Tac. Hist. 3. 21. Wellesley (op. cit. p.148) believes that the two Flavian soldiers who were killed sabotaging a huge Vitellian ballista were 'probably Praetorians' (Tac. Hist. 3. 23; Dio Cass. 65. 14. 2).
157. Tac. Hist. 3. 84.
158. See note 101.
159. Tac. Hist. 4. 46.
160. Quite apart from the reluctance with which some of Vitellius' Praetorians surrendered there were still Vitellian sympathisers at large in Rome (Tac. Hist. 4. 38).
161. Tac. Hist. 4. 46.
162. Tac. Hist. 4. 46; cp. Dio Cass. 65. 22. 2.
163. Tac. Hist. 4. 46. Keppie (see note 32) (p.92 note 100) details epigraphic evidence showing that some of Vitellius' Praetorians did retain their positions.
164. Tac. Hist. 4. 68; cp. Suet. Dom 11; see also A. Passerini 'M. Arrecino Clemente' Athenaeum 18 (1940) p.145-63.
165. Suet. Tl. 6.
166. Mucianus presented the soldiers with 100 sesterces (Dio Cass. 65. 22. 2). Vespasian provided a further donative on his arrival in Rome (Dio Cass. 66. 10. 1a).
For his attitude to discipline within the army see Suet. Vesp. 8.

CHAPTER VII : THE PRAETORIAN GUARD AS A POLITICAL FORCE

1. Syme, Tac. p.10 'In the Annals of the empire a constant indictment stands against the Praetorians for turbulence and rapacity. It was not always deserved'.
2. C. Duffy, The Army of Maria-Theresa (Vancouver 1977) p.68.
3. C. K. Webster, The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1812-15 (London 1931) p.469.
4. H. Lachouque and A. S. K. Brown, The Anatomy of Glory (London 1978) p.4.
5. Reitlinger, op. cit. p.2 '(The S.S.) had ceased to be the Praetorian Guard of a dictator; and it had spread its net far beyond the function of an inner political police in a one-party state like the NKVD in Russia'.
G. H. Stein, The Waffen S.S. (New York 1966) p.5 'Hitler had in fact established a Praetorian Guard which stood above both Party and State'. B. Quarrie, Hitler's Samurai: The Waffen S.S. in Action (Cambridge 1983) p.23. 'The creation of an elite force, which was and is often compared to the Roman Praetorian Guard or Napoleon's Imperial Guard, began to attract increasing numbers of recruits'.
6. Dio Cass. 58. 12. 2.
7. Jos. AJ 19. 214; Dio Cass. 59. 30. 2.
8. Tac. Hist. 1. 36; 1. 80f; 2. 12; 2. 18; Plut. Otho 3; 5; Suet. Otho 8-9; Dio Cass. 64. 9. 2.
9. Tac. Ann. 16. 27 inter quorum aspectus et minas ingressi curiam senatores.
10. App. BC. 4. 7 *αὐτίκα μὲν ἡ πόλις ἦν πλήρης ὀπλῶν τε καὶ σφρῶν διατεταγμένων ἐς τὰ ἐπὶ κείρα, αὐτίκα δὲ ἐν μέσῳ τούτων ἦγετο ἐκκλήσις.*
11. W. J. Sirois, 'The Roman Secret Service' CJ 57 (1961) p.65-72; cp. P. K. Baillie-Reynolds 'The Troops quartered in the castra peregrinorum' JRS 13 (1923) p.168-89.
For evidence of frumentarii under Trajan; see S. H. A. Hadrian 11. 6. Professional torturers and executioners may have been attached to the same camp (scholiast on Juv. Sat. 6. 480; Codex Theodosianus 16. 12. 3).
12. /

12. Dio Cass. 78. 17. 1.
13. He was praetor in AD. 88 (Tac. Hist. 1. 1). His justification for collaborating with a tyrant can be found in Agr. 42.
14. Tac. Ann. 1. 2. ceteri nobilium, quanto quis servitio promptior, opibus et honoribus extollerentur ac novis ex rebus aucti, tuta et praesentia quam vetera et periculosa mallent; cp. Agr. 2.
15. M. Pani, 'Il circolo di Germanico' Ann. Fac. Mag. Bari 7 (1968) p.109-27.
16. Dio Cassus' allegation (58. 8. 2) that the Praetorians were ready to support a coup by Seianus but backed down when they discovered that such an action was opposed by the *συνος* seems highly improbable.
17. Suet. Cl. 10; Jos. AJ 19. 247.
18. Plut. Galba 2.
19. Jos. AJ 19. 217; cp. Suet. Cl. 10; Dio Cass. 60. 1. 2.
20. Suet. Nero 49; Dio Cass. 63. 29. 1-2.
21. Suet. Nero 48; cp. Plut. Galba 7.
22. Suet. Nero 49.
23. The period of service in the Praetorian Guard was 16 years, compared with 25 for legionaries.
24. Durry, p.140f. 191; Watson, op. cit. p.99; 191 note 253.
25. cp. A. N. Sherwin-White, 'Procurator Augusti' PBSR 15 (1939) p.13.
26. cp. Keppie, op. cit p.179.
27. H. M. D. Parker, The Roman Legions (Oxford 1928) p.201.
28. B. Dobson, 'The Centurionate and Social Mobility during the Principate' in C. Nicolet (ed.) Recherches sur les structures sociales dans l'antiquité classique (Paris 1970) p.99.
29. Tac. Hist. 1. 84 nam ut ex vobis senatores, ita ex senatoribus principes nascuntur.
30. /

30. A. Stein, *Der römische Ritterstand* (Munich 1927) p.175, 214; cp. Dobson, op. cit. p.99f.
31. B. Dobson and D. J. Breeze, 'The Rome Cohorts and the Legionary Centurionate' *Epig. Stud.* 8 (1969) p.100f.
32. Durry, p.3 alors que les chevaliers d'origine, par le triple échelon de la milice équestre, se hâtent vers les procuratères inférieures, une carrière tout autre attend les chevaliers-prétoriens. Plus lente en apparence au début, elle finit en beauté. A l'armée: soldats et sous-officiers successivement dans les trois corps urbains principaux (vigiles, cohortes urbaines et prétoriennes), ils partent comme centurions dans une légion; à quoi succèdent le triple centurionat urbain, le principilat légionnaire et - troisième retour à Rome avant les emplois supérieurs - le triple tribunat urbain. Dans l'administration: il vont des hautes préfectures provinciales aux ministères du Palatin et aux hautes prefectures urbaines. cp. A. von Donaszewski, op. cit. p.105, 195.
33. Stein, op. cit. p.169.
34. E. Birley, *Roman Britain and the Roman Army* (Kendal 1953) p.104-122, especially p.117; cp. Dobson and Breeze, op. cit. p.117.
35. Durry, p.133; for a contrasting view see Syme, *Tac.* p.183, note 4 'it was not common for a soldier to go so far'.
36. ILS 2648 (= Szall. 283 = Braund 518).
37. *Tac. Ann.* 11. 30; 11. 35.
38. *Tac. Hist.* 1. 31.
39. Dobson, op. cit. p.99.
40. Some centurions were promoted from the ranks, others were directly commissioned.
41. K. Hopkins, 'Elite Mobility in the Roman Empire', *Past and Present* 32 (1965) p.18.
42. *Jos AJ* 19. 111-3; 19. 46; 19. 110; 19. 190.
43. *Tac. Ann.* 15. 65; 15. 67; 15. 68.
44. /

44. Scramuzza, op. cit. p.54 'this representative body of Italian bourgeois'. Passerini (p. VI) claims to reject this view, although he appears to contradict himself on p.164.
45. ILS 2033.
46. ILS 206.
47. Durry, p.253-4; cp. Passerini, p.166.
48. Passerini, p.168.
49. See especially O. Bohn, Ueber die Heimat der Prätorianer (Berlin 1883).
50. Tac. Ann. 4. 5.
51. Durry, p.256; cp. RE. XXII. 2, 1627 where the language is almost identical, 'wenn die Legionäre Italiener sind, gehören die Pratorianer den ältesten Kolonien an; wenn die Legionäre Provincialen sind, sind die Prätorianer Italiener; wenn die Legionäre Soldaten aus den Grenzgebieten sind, werden die Prätorianer, aus den besten Legionen ausgewählt, denen des Donaugebietes'. Fabia (op. cit. p.38) also accepts Tacitus' statement and argues that this tradition was not broken until Vitellius enrolled his legionaries into the Guard in AD. 69 (Tac. Hist. 2. 93).
52. Tac. Ann 4. 4. non eadem virtute ac modestia agere, quia plerumque inopes ac vagi sponte militiam sumant. Durry (p.241) believes the increase in the number of cohorts from nine to twelve necessitated an extension of the area of recruitment.
Passerini (p.159) mentions the falling population in southern Italy as a source of difficulties in recruitment.
53. CIL 6. 2763; ILS 2023.
54. ILS 2027; Pliny, HN 25. 17 nuper cuiusdam militantis in praetorio mater vidit in quiete ut radicem silvestris rosae quam cynorrhodon vocant blanditam sibi aspectu pridie in fructo mitteret filio bibendam.
55. ILS 2030; 2032. Gaius Julius Montanus, the subject of the latter inscription, served in the 12th Praetorian cohort. For the dating of this inscription to the principate of Gaius, see Bohn op. cit. p.6; cp. Durry p.79.
It is also worth noting that, according to Aurelius Victor (de Caes. 3. 16), the centurion of the Guard who discovered Claudius in the palace after the murder of Gaius came from Epirus.
56. /

56. There is no evidence to suggest that membership of the Praetorian Guard was used as a means of restructuring Roman society. By way of contrast the following passage is of interest.

'Before 1938, 40 per cent of the S.S. officer-cadets had only received elementary school education and whereas in the armed forces 49 per cent of the officers were of military families, the proportion was only 5 per cent in the armed formations of the S.S. (S.S. - V.T.). Likewise, in the Army less than 2 per cent were of peasant stock, whereas 90 per cent of S.S. - V.T. commanders had been brought up on the land. This reflects the high proportion of recruits which came from the countryside rather than the towns - in some parts of Germany as many as a third of the farmers' sons joined the ranks of the armed S.S. - the same areas which gave the greatest support to the NSDAP'.

J. Lucas and M. Cooper, *Hitler's Elite - Leibstandarte S.S.* (London 1975) p.37.

57. Tac. Hist. 1. 36 nec tribunis aut centurionibus adeundi locus; cp. 1. 46; 1. 84; 2. 18; 2. 39; 2. 41.

58. Tac. Hist. 1. 80; cp. 2. 12.

59. Tac. Hist. 1. 85 ita sparsis per domos occulto habitu et maligna cura in omnis, quos nobilitas aut opes aut aliqua insignis claritudo rumoribus obiecerat.

60. C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford 1962) p.107-54.

61. C. W. Cassinelli, 'The Totalitarian Party' *Journal of Politics* 24 (1962) p.113 note 3.

62. Tac. Ann. 2. 41 brevis et infaustos populi Romani amores; Cicero, *Dom.* 4 inconstantia plebis; App. BC. *ὁσος ἀνάγκη*; cp. Juv. Sat. 10. 80-81.

Rostovtzeff (SEHRE² p.80) is not alone among modern commentators in accepting these jaundiced views rather too readily.

63. Cic. *Planc.* 9 non est consilium in vulgo, non ratio, non discrimen, non diligentia; cp. Yavetz, op. cit. p.35.

64. Tac. Ann. 1. 77; Dio Cass. 57. 14. 2; cp. Suet. Tib. 37.

65. There were substantial riots the suppression of which required Praetorian intervention during Nero's principate after his murder of Agrippina (Tac. Ann. 14. 8) and his banishment of Octavia (Tac. Ann. 14. 60; Suet. Nero 35). There were popular protests during Piso's trial after the death of Germanicus (Tac. Ann. 3. 14) and in AD. 61 after the murder of Pedanius Secundus (Tac. Ann. 14. 45).

The /

The most serious disorders, however, were prompted by breakdowns in the supply of food. In 38 BC. many people were killed by Antony's soldiers after Octavian had been stoned in the Forum (App. BC. 5. 68. Vell. Pat. 2. 77; cp. Dio Cass. 48. 31. 6). The plebs stormed the Senate during a famine in 22 BC. (Dio Cass. 54. 1. 1-3; cp. Suet. Aug. 52; Vell. Pat. 2. 89). In AD. 51 the Praetorians had to rescue Claudius after he was attacked by a hungry mob in the Forum (Tac. Ann. 12. 4; Suet. Cl. 12). for the part played in the downfall of Nero by the adverse public reaction to a shortage of food see Bradley, op. cit. p.451-8.

66. Suet. Cl. 12. The culmination of this antagonism was reached in AD. 238 when the Praetorians set fire to much of Rome in revenge for an assault on their camp by the people who had been armed by the Senate (Hdn. 7. 12. 5).
67. EJ 251 (= Braund 485). This is perhaps a less than satisfactory example. The inscription has traditionally been dated to AD. 29 because of the phrase *Missus duobus Geminis*, although otherwise there is nothing to suggest that it is earlier than Flavian in date. The veteran himself is not from Rome and whether he even married Masuria is not clear. Obviously he stayed on in Rome after his discharge, but there is no indication as to Masuria's origins.
68. Suet. Aug. 25.
69. Cp. Cic. Rep. 1. 43 *tamen ipsa aequabilitas est iniqua cum habet nullos gradus dignitatis*.

CHAPTER VIII : THE PRAETORIAN GUARD AS A MILITARY FORCE

1. Passerini p. VIII; cp. p.133, 168, 197, 202. I would respectfully suggest that Passerini's work reflects the political situation in Italy in 1939. It is possible to detect throughout his work echoes of Fascist ideology. Cp. 197 'sarebbe non solo ingenuo, ma antistorico, negare che il nuovo governo di Roma volesse essere e fosse un governo forte: ma - salvo le isolate eccezioni, che allo storico d'un impero non debbono interessare - era appunto ciò che i milioni di sudditi di Roma chiedevano al principato, che esso fosse, cioè, tanto forte da assicurare, dopo l'orribile tragedia in cui era precipitato il vecchio governo oligarchico, la pace benefica per tutti: all 'interno, dove pace significava serenità e benessere, verso l'esterno, dove portava una sicurezza ed un prestigio adeguati alla grandezza dello stato'.

More specifically, I believe that his view of the Guard's role is coloured by the activities of Mussolini's blackshirt militia, the MVSN, which provided combat units for the Italian forces in Abyssinia and Spain.

2. Lachouque, op. cit. p.504 'This was no palace troop or political instrument, but a corps of carefully chosen soldiers who won their privileges by distinguished service in the army'.

P. Mansel, Pillars of Monarchy (London 1984) p.41 'The 'French' Imperial Guard - which now contained many Italians and Germans - in the campaign of 1813 was more than ever the elite and reserve of the army.'

3. R. Humble, Warfare in the Ancient World (London 1980) p.226.
4. It goes beyond the evidence even to argue that Septimius used the garrison of Rome which he increased almost threefold as a central reserve or as a mobile field army. The major cavalry corps which Gallienus created at Mediolanum between 264 and 268 should be regarded as the first reserve of this kind.
5. Dio Cass. 55. 33. 1.
6. Dio Cass. 56. 23 2.
7. Dessau, op. cit. p.257; we know that Augustus used Aquileia as a forward headquarters when campaigning in the north (Suet. Aug. 20).
8. Suet. Aug. 49.
9. Tac. Ann. 1. 17; Suet. Tib. 25.
10. /

10. Tac. Hist. 1. 89 quod raro alias, praetorianus urbanusque miles in aciem deducti.
11. Tac. Hist. 1. 23; 2. 19; cp. Suet. Gaius 43.
12. Plut. Otho 5.
13. It is noteworthy that in Germany the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, the bodyguard division, were mocked by the more professional soldiers of the German Army as the 'Asphalt Soldiers', since it was believed that their impressive appearance on the parade-ground had been developed at the expense of military skills. There may have been some basis for this view since, during the campaigns of 1939-40 in Poland and France, this division sustained a disproportionately high level of casualties.

Similarly, the relatively poor performance of the Scots and Welsh Guards during the Falklands campaign was explained by military spokesmen as being due to the fact that these battalions had been on public duties during the previous months and so were at a low level of combat readiness.

14. Tac. Ann. 2. 16; Suet. Gaius 43; ILS 2701; 2648.
15. We may reasonably compare the Praetorian cohorts, both in their principal role and in public perception of their function, with the Guard regiments of Charles II.

In 1661 that King's Guard numbered 3200 men and 374 officers - a total not dissimilar to the 5000 Praetorians Augustus had at his disposal. A country which had endured with an ill-grace the interventions in politics of the New Model Army between 1647 and 1660 was understandably apprehensive that the soldiers would become unmanageable and that Charles, like Cromwell, would be willing to use such troops, either directly or as a threat, to achieve his political aims (L.G. Schworer, 'No Standing Armies!' The antiarmy Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England (London 1974) p.58, 81-2). This fear was, to some extent, justified since Charles' main reason for maintaining their regiments was his belief that his father's difficulties would not have occurred had he had such a force under his direct command. Let us be very clear on this. Had such troops been available to Charles I, they could not have turned Marston Moor or Naseby from defeats into victories but they could, in the years before 1641, have prevented, through their intimidatory presence, the rise of the parliamentary opposition to that king.

Such, at least, was the view of his son - a view with which Augustus and his successors would surely have had some sympathy. They maintained the Praetorian Guard for a similar reason.

CHAPTER IX : PREFECTS AND PREFECTURE

1. Passerini has a long and thoughtful account of the activities of the Praetorian prefects (p.207f). This has been criticised by S. J. De Laet ('Cohortes Prétoriennes et Préfets du Prétoire au Haut-Empire'. Rev. Belg. Phil. Hist. 23 (1944) who condemns it as being 'unilaterale et souvent superficielle'. (p.503). Passerini is not, however, without his supporters. Howe (op. cit. p.4) writes that 'it is a great merit of Passerini's work that he has treated the prefecture as a developing institution.'
2. Dio Cass. 55. 10. 10.
3. Although Dio Cassius places the creation of the prefecture before the downfall of Julia, it is, more probably, one of the results of that scandal.
4. Millar, ERW p.465f.
5. The maintenance of the closest contacts with his Guard is a necessity, not an indulgence, for a despot. In the final analysis, they are the guarantors of his survival. A recent example confirms this point. After the military coup against his regime, General Alfredo Stroessner of Paraguay fled to the barracks of his Presidential Guard, on which he had lavished considerable attention. With the support of these troops he was able to negotiate for himself a comfortable exile in Brazil.
6. The origin of Q. Ostorius Scapula is uncertain. Amiternum is suggested by A. M. Hansen 'Publius Ostorius Scapula - Augustan Prefect of Egypt' ZPE 47 (1982) p.247. We also know from Tacitus that the family had estates in Liguria (Ann. 16. 15).
As far as concerns P. Salvius Aper, Syme (A.A. p.301) denies any connection with the Salvii Othones from Ferentum in Etruria. Levick (Tib. p.43) is more circumspect, merely noting that 'relationship with the Salvii Othones is not established'. There is undoubtedly much to commend in Syme's suggestion, based on ILS 4902, that the prefect came from Brixia in Transpadane Italy.
7. For the honours bestowed on Valerius Ligur see Dio Cass. 60. 23. 2-3. PIR' V. 189 suggests that he may have been the father of Varius Ligur (Tac. Ann. 4. 42; 6. 30); cp. also ILS 171.
8. L. Seius Strabo, described by Velleius Paterculus as 'princeps equestris ordinis' was prefect in AD. 14 at the time of Augustus' death (Tac. Ann. 1. 7. 2; 1. 24. 2).
cp. Juvenal's description of Crispinus (Sat. 4. 32) as 'princeps equitum'.
9. /

9. S. J. De Laet, 'Les Pouvoirs Militaires des Préfets du Prétoire et leur développement progressif' Rev. Belg. Phil. Hist. 25 (1946-7) p.515. cp. Howe, op. cit. p.10f.

10. Tac. Ann. 1. 7 (Tiberius) signum praetoriis cohortibus ut imperator dederat; 13. 2. (Nero) signum more militiae petenti tribuno dedit optimae matris.

We should note the political importance of this ceremonial act, especially at the beginning and end of reigns: cp. SHA Vita Pii 12. 6 and Vita Marci. 7. 3 which refer to the final hours of Antoninus Pius and emphasise how his final watchword 'Aequanimitas' helped smooth the accession of Marcus Aurelius.

11. Suet. Cal. 56 primas sibi partes Cassius Chaerea tribunus cohortis praetoriae depoposcit, quem Gaius seniore iam et mollem et effeminatum denotare omni probro consuerat et modo signum petenti 'Priapum' aut 'Venerem' dare.

12. ILS 206 quod plerique ex eo genere hominum etiam militare in praetorio meo dicuntur.

13. CIL XVI. 21 (from Vespasian's principate) nomina speculatorum, qui in praetorio meo militaverunt, item militum, qui in cohortibus novem et quattuor urbanis, subieci, quibus fortiter et pie militia functis ius tribuo conubi

cp. CIL XVI 95; 98.

14. Dio Cass. 52. 24. 6 (Maecenas' apocryphal speech of advice to Augustus); cp. Dio Cassius 75. 14. 2; see also M. Hammond 'The significance of the Speech of Maecenas in Dio Cassius, Book LII TAPA 63 (1932) p.89-102, esp. p.94.

15. SHA Vita Had. 9. 4 cui cum successorem dare non posset, quia non petebat, id egit ut peteret, atque ubi primum petiit, in Turbonem transtulit potestatem.

16. See ch. 5 note 81.

17. Aelius Seianus, Naevius Sestorius Macro, Rufrius Pollio, Catonius Justus, Faenius Rufus, Ofonius Tigellinus and Nymphidius Sabinus.

18. SHA Vita. Alex. 19. 1 praefectum praetorii sibi ex senatus auctoritate constituit.

This was part of a general policy of granting the Senate a larger share in the administration of the empire and increasing its prestige.

19. /

19. See ch. 2 note 80.
20. ILS 1321.
21. Tac. Ann. 13. 20; Suet. Nero 35.
22. Schol. on Juv. Sat. 1. 155.
23. Suet. Galba 14; Tac. Hist. 1. 6; 1. 13; 1. 14; 1. 33; Plut Galba 13.
24. Tac. Ann 13. 22; 14. 51.
25. Small. 254; Tac. Hist. 1. 72.
26. Contrast the view of A. N. Sherwin-White op. cit. p.16 'Indeed throughout the Julio-Claudian period appointments to the senior prefectures seem to have been achieved by personal and political influence rather than by merit'.
27. Tac. Hist. 1. 46.
28. E. Stein, Geschichte des spätromischen Reiches 1 (Vienna 1928) p.54.
 'Fast bis ans Ende des Prinzipats war nach römischen Staatsrecht der Träger einer höchsten militärischen Gewalt innerhalb seines Kommandosprenghels zugleich Chef der Zivilverwaltung, sein Hauptquartier (praetorium) daher in betreffenden Gebiet die Höchste Regierungsstelle. Dieses Prinzip galt auch vom Kaiser und vom praetorium des Kaisers, das infolgedessen die Zentrale nicht nur für die militärischen sondern für alle Angelegenheiten war, in denen der Kaiser kraft seines prokonsularischen Imperiums zu entscheiden hatte. Daraus erklärt sich die vielseitige Kompetenz der Vorsteher seines praetorium die praefecti praetorio; sie erstreckte sich auf alle kaiserlich Geschäfte mit Ausnahme derjenigen, die der Kaiser in eigener Person oder, was rechtliche auf dasselbe. herauskam, durch seine privaten Diener oder Angestellten erledigte'.
29. De Laet (1946-7) p.513 'Il nous parait donc evident qu' E. Stein se trompe en suggérant que l'extension des pouvoirs des préfets est basée sur la signification même de leur titulature'.
30. Tac. Ann. 1. 7; 4. 1.
31. /

31. Although De Laet is careful to point out that his conclusions are based on the works of Tacitus alone, we should note that CIL XI 2707 - a dedication from Volsinii, a city of Etruria, honouring Seius Strabo as commander of the Guard - uses the term praefectus praetorio. Even if we limit our consideration to Tacitus, we find Seianus referred to as praetorii praefectus (Ann 1. 24).

32. De Laet (1946-7. p.511-2) seems to me to attach too much significance to the terminology of later historians writing in Greek: Dio Cassius, for example, calls a succession of prefects *ἐπαρχὸς τῶν δορυφόρων* (55. 10. 10; 57. 19. 6; 59. 10. 6)

33. Howe, op. cit. p.16 'The increase of the scope of that prefecture is probably better explained by the relatively lesser adaptability of other central organs of imperial administration than by any inherent necessity as a result of which they grew out of the command of the bodyguards'.
 cp. De Laet, 1946-7. p.513 note 4 (criticising the approach of Howe).
 'L. Howe oublie en effet d'expliquer pourquoi les empereurs ont délégué leurs pouvoirs précisément aux préfets de la garde et pas à d'autres fonctionnaires; il ne nous dit pas non plus pourquoi ni comment la préfecture du prétoire était plus souple, plus adaptable que d'autres fonctions'.

34. Schol. on Juv. 14. 305 per translationem disciplinae militaris Sparteolorum Romae, quorum cohortes in tutelam Urbis cum hamis et cum aqua vigilias curare consueverunt vicinis.

35. Augustus accepted a cura annonae in 22 BC in the aftermath of a famine and organised a board of prefects to oversee distributions. He later appointed an equestrian praefectus annonae to organise supplies.

36. De Laet (1944) p.514.

37. Mart. Epigr. 6. 76. 1 sacri lateris custos.

38. Tac. Ann 4. 59. 1-2.

39. Tac. Ann 13. 20.

40. Tac. Ann 15. 37; Dio Cass. 62. 15. 1-6.

41. /

41. Dio Cass. 63. 13. 1.
42. Tac. Hist. 1. 81.
43. Macrob. Sat. 2. 4. 18; cp. Pliny. Pan 86.
44. Howe (op. cit. p.32) is more cautious: 'Since however the regular organisation of the council, with permanent members, dates from the time of Hadrian, we cannot say that the prefects were ex officio members before then. The earliest reference to the prefects as regular members seems to be from the time of Marcus Aurelius'.
45. Suet. Aug. 35. It is possible that this senatorial privy council was distinct from the emperor's consilium. (see Durry p.174 note 5).
46. Suet. Tib. 55.
47. Tac. Ann 13. 23. Burrus quamvis reus inter iudices sententiam dixit.
48. Sen. Clem. 2. 1. 2; cp. Suet. Nero 10.
49. De Laet (1944) p.504 'ne serait-ce pas Tibère qui l'a créée et a élargi de la sorte les attributions de ses préfets?'
50. Millar ERW p.125.
51. Tac. Ann 11. 1. We may also consider Rufrius Pollio's involvement in the detention of Chaerea and Sabinus (Jos. A J, 19. 267) and Tigellinus' persecution of the philosopher Demetrius (Philostr. VA 4. 42).
52. Jos. A J 18. 235.
53. Paul, Ad. Phil. 1. 12-13.
54. Tac. Ann. 6. 47 sed testium interrogationi, tormentis servorum Macronem praesedissee commentarii ad senatum missi ferebant, nullaeque in eos imperatoris litterae suspicionem dabant.
cp. Dio Cass. 58. 21. 3; 58. 24. 2.
55. Tac. Ann. 14. 60; Dio Cass. 62. 13. 3-4.
56. Tac. Ann. 15. 57; Dio Cass. 62. 27. 3.
57. /

57. Dio Cass. 69. 18. This passage which describes Turbo's conscientiousness may refer to his activities as an assessor of Hadrian rather than as a judge in his own court.
58. Ulpian, De Offic. Procons. 9.
59. Howe, op. cit. p.32 'His judicial authority must have grown from a series of special cases handed over to him for trial by the princeps'.
60. Dio Cass. 72. 9. 1; SHA Vita Comm. 5. 1-4; Hdn. 1. 8. 1f.
61. De Laet (1946-7) p.517 note 1; Durry p.170.
62. Suet. Dom. 6; Dio Cass. 67. 6. 6; Eutrop. 7. 23; Oros. 7. 10. 4. cp. Juv. Sat. 4. 111-2.

et qui vulturibus servabat viscera Dacis
Fuscus marmorea meditatus proelia villa.
63. Howe, op. cit. p.21.
64. Dio Cass. 56. 19-21; cp. Tac. Ann 1.3.
65. A. Sorel, Louis XIV, Arbitrary Despot, from the Greatness of Louis XIV ed. William F. Church (Toronto 1972) p.101.
66. Durry p.170.
67. De Laet (1946-7) p.516 note 4.
68. Ibid p.518.
69. Tac. Ann. 1. 24 rector iuveni et ceteris periculorum praemiorumque ostentator.
70. Tac. Ann. 2. 16; 2. 20; 3. 2.
71. De Laet (1946-7) p.517 note 1 appears to think that it was Rufrius Crispinus who took part in the British campaign: (cp. Grant AOC p.154), but I would rather believe that Dio Cassius (60. 23. 2) is referring to Rufrius Pollio (cp. Passerini p.279: RE 2423.).
72. Suet. Dom. 6.
73. cp. De Laet (1947-7, p.517 note 5) who mentions very briefly that that 'les préfets jouèrent un rôle non négligeable pendant les guerres civiles de 69 et 193.'
74. /

74. Tac. Hist. 1. 87.

75. Tac. Hist. 3. 61.

76. SHA. Vita Comm. 6. 6-8.

77. P. A. Brunt ('The Administrators of Roman Egypt' JRS 65, (1975) p.124) refers to the prefecture of Egypt as 'the greatest prize in an equestrian career'. Although this position may have changed during the Flavian ascendancy with the appointment of Tiberius Julius Alexander, who had already held the prefecture of Egypt, to the Praetorian prefecture, (E.G. Turner, The High Hibeh Papyri 2 (London 1955) no. 215 p.135-7.: 'Tiberius Julius Alexander JRS 44 (1954) p.56-64) there can be little doubt that until AD. 70 the prefecture of Egypt was regarded as the premier post in the equestrian cursus (Tac. Hist. 1. 11).

As for the prefects themselves, Seius Strabo was prefect of Egypt by AD. 15 (ILS 8996), leaving his son as sole commander of the Praetorian cohorts (Dio Cass. 57. 19. 6). Macro was appointed prefect of Egypt in succession to Avilius Flaccus in the first half of AD. 38, but was forced along with his wife to commit suicide before he could take up his post (See E. M. Smallwood, Philo's Legatio ad Gaium p.178-187). Lusius Geta, suspected by Agrippina of residual loyalty to Messalina, was removed from the Praetorian prefecture in AD. 51 (Tac. Ann. 11. 42). Agrippina was, however, not willing at this stage to antagonise unnecessarily the powerful faction which adhered to Britannicus and Geta was not disgraced; by AD. 54 he held the prefecture of Egypt (Small. 383).

The case of Q. Ostorius Scapula is more contentious: it was long believed that Augustus' first Praetorian prefect advanced to the prefecture of Egypt (Passerini p.275; Brunt op. cit. p.124, 142 (D. Ostorius Scapula is surely a misprint); Levick, Tib. p.43. However the recent argument of Hanson (op. cit. p.243f) that the praenomen of the prefect of Egypt was Publius is compelling and has been accepted by Syme (A.A. p.301 note 8).

78. Dio Cass. 59. 10. 7; Tac. Ann. 16. 17; ILS 1321; Tac. Ann. 15. 72.

79. Dio Cass. 58. 12. 7; Tac. Hist. 4. 4.

80. Dio Cass. 60. 23. 2.

81. Tac. Ann. 15. 50; Dio Cass. 62. 24. 1.

82. Plut. Galba 9.

83. /

- 83. Dio Cass. 58. 5. 1; cp. Tac. Ann. 4. 40; Jos. A J 18. 181-2.
- 84. Philo, Leg. 52-61.
- 85. Dio Cass. 60. 18. 3.
- 86. Sen. Apocol. 13. 5.

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